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Olive Carlton Smyth's 'watercolour', 'The Seventh Day', offered for sale by Christie's (Scotland), at 164/165 Bath Glasgow G2 4TG. In their sale, Fine Victorian and Modern Paintings and Drawings, on Thursday, April 19.

Keeping close to the earth

Stephen Fender

JACKSON J. BENSON
The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer
1,116pp. Heinemann. £28.
0434370509

Right at the beginning, Jackson Benson tells his readers what kind of writer John Steinbeck was not, and by implication, what kind of biography he has not written. Not every thread of Steinbeck's life was tied to his art, he says, and not every statement was a "quotable pronouncement". "As a young man, he was employed in hard physical labor close to the earth for extended periods of time." He was certainly not like Henry James, in the atmosphere of whose sensibility "one would be hard put to imagine bare hands touching bare ground". Steinbeck was neither a neurotic artist, nor an artist of the neurotic, but "an unusually healthy man" whose "greatness... comes not from his wound but from his wholeness".

The prospect over the next thousand pages, therefore, is less than inviting. A healthy, unexceptionable life not tied to art seems a poor choice for a weighty biographical thirteen years in the making. Indeed the reader used to the sort of literary mementos serialized in the London "quality" Sunday newspapers will find Benson's book pretty heavy going. No epigrams, nothing sexually ambiguous (or even very adventurous), no brilliant judgments of contemporary literary figures, dismissive or otherwise. As for literary gossip, the nearest we get to it is:

[Arthur] Miller and [Ernie] Pyle were taken by the heads of United Press to dinner at 21, and when they walked into the restaurant, Steinbeck invited them all - ten in the party - to join him at his table. The wire service men were hard drinkers, and by the time they had dinner and wine, the bill came to several hundred dollars - but Steinbeck insisted on paying it. Afterwards Steinbeck and Miller walked the streets of the city together and talked.

This account details everything except what would interest the biographer of Bloomsbury. What did they talk about? Safer not to ask, perhaps:

Elia Kazan and Burl Ives visited [the Steinbecks] one evening, and as they were leaving, walking down the street together, Kazan glanced back at the house and said, "God damn, I do hate the middle class." Ives, happy to see his friend had at last found a safe harbor, was taken aback. "What the hell are you talking about? If John wasn't in there, for Christ's

sake, he'd be out in the cold... probably wouldn't be alive. He's comfortable. What the hell, Middle-class, my ass."

Indeed, although Steinbeck had all kinds of good friends, from the Monterey marine biologist Ed Ricketts and the photographer Robert Capa to political notables like Adlai Stevenson and Lyndon B. Johnson, he was uneasy in the company of other authors, with the significant exception of John O'Hara. Painful meetings with Hemingway and Faulkner resulted in near-silent, mutual suspicion, while friends tried fustily to mediate. "Don't talk about my books", said Faulkner. Though Steinbeck had no professional qualms about acting as an apologist for various American government agencies, both during and after the Second World War, official literary get-togethers like conferences and publishers' parties made him uneasy.

The literary establishment, at least that part of it centred on the reviews and publishing houses of Manhattan, paid him back in kind. The critical consensus was that Steinbeck wrote a number of charming local-colour pieces (*Tortilla Flat*, *Cannery Row*), an insupportable allegory (*East of Eden*), a lot of strained journalism and one major work - *The Grapes of Wrath* - variously judged as enlightened propaganda or a masterpiece of American fiction. In 1948, apparently feeling he could already summarize the author's career, Edmund Wilson wrote that those "connoisseurs who establish the standards of taste... the people who can distinguish Grails A and who prefer it to the other grades" would judge Steinbeck's novels "to mark precisely the borderline between work that is definitely superior and work that is definitely bad". But inconveniently for this assessment, Steinbeck won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962. The New York critics were not abashed. "Does a Moral Vision of the Thirties Deserve a Nobel Prize?" asked Arthur Mizener in the *New York Times Book Review*. Nope. His "limited talent is, in his best books, watered down by tenth-rate philosophizing". After *The Grapes of Wrath* "most serious readers seem to have ceased to read him".

"Incredible snubbery", writes Benson: "an astonishing piece of condescension." Any Californian will understand his sense of outrage at this East-coast hauteur. No wonder Benson reacts by bringing Steinbeck on as a bare-handed fictionalist of the actual posed against a literary establishment involved in making (and

judging) art about art. The distinction may even have a kind of rough truth to it, and certainly the participants played their roles as if it did, but in fact it was not nearly so clear cut. Steinbeck was not Jack London, however he may once have tried to pattern himself after that model of working-class writer in the wilderness. The son of an agricultural accountant who owned a feed store, he was born and brought up in the market town of Salinas, just



inland from the old California State capital, Monterey. He had the better part of a university education, three periods of study at Stanford interrupted by temporary work. Some of these jobs were out of doors, "close to the earth" (he worked as a surveyor and as a hand on one of the Spreckels sugar-beet ranches); others were in the Spreckels refinery, as a carpenter's mate, and later making routine chemical tests on the product. All these jobs came through his father's influence. He didn't work to stay alive, but to "get experience", just as many other middle-class Californian boys do to this day.

And what kind of realist was John Steinbeck? Well, not a socialist realist, even if *Time* magazine branded him throughout his career as a proletarian writer. Not, that is, the kind of realist described by Friedrich Engels in his

famous letter to the English socialist problem novelist, Margaret Harkness:

In [your] *City Girl* the working class figures as a passive mass, unable to help itself... All attempts to drag it out of its world misery come from without, from above. Now if this was a correct description about 1880 or 1910, in the days of Saint-Simon and Robert Owen, it cannot appear so to 1987 to a man who for nearly fifty years has had the honour of sharing in most of the lights of the militant proletariat.

But in *The Grapes of Wrath*, despite all that talk from the voice-over narrative, rather like the sound track of no old *March-of-Time* news-reel, about a great force moving the affairs of men, about the power of the collective will taking two steps forward and only one back, and so on, the only material expression of the collective will - the trade union - is shown to be wholly at the mercy of deputy sheriffs and hully boys hired by the farm owners. "Indeed," writes Benson of *In Dubious Battle*, "the book's reputation for realism rests to a considerable extent on the author's relatively harsh treatment of its labor-union characters... [one] coldly calculating and manipulative... and... a young fanatic." This was neither Engels's socialist realism nor, oddly enough, faithful to the facts of the San Joaquin Valley cotton strike of 1933, when even the professional union organizers, Clarence Decker and Pat Chambers, admitted they had gone into the struggle with grave doubts. As Benson tells it, "It was not... the organizers who made the strike possible so much as it was, in Decker's words, 'the development of leadership from the ranks, from the bottom up'."

Of course they could have been thinking wishfully, according to their Marxist dogma, but it's strange that their account of the strike should have made so little impact on Steinbeck, who had met them both. In any case, they seem to have been quite unlike the union agitators portrayed in *In Dubious Battle*. But then, writes Benson, Steinbeck may have been using his "convincing detail" not as "an end in itself but a means by which he could construct a more powerful metaphor... a scientific exploration of the stimulation and reaction of the mob". What kind of science rings false on all levels of experience? It is a "science" born in metaphor and dying in metaphor without passing through an intervening stage of actuality - a kind of loosely transposed "biologism" that posits human beings as cells in a "phalanx" of a larger organism evolving, though with no

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attention to the fortunes of the individual, into a higher state of being.

This belief is one of several states of mind that marks Steinbeck clearly as a Californian writer. A generation before Steinbeck, Frank Norris had attended the lectures of the geologist Joseph Le Conte at Berkeley, where he learned that society made progress through the struggle between the "lower" brute instincts in man, and the "higher" principles of reason. The lesson had been worth all his English literature courses put together, Norris claimed. Steinbeck too had been much impressed by another authoritative-sounding analogy between phylogeny and social progress, developed in a summer course at Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station, near Mantey, to the effect that "in all parts of nature... wholes are so related to their parts that not only does the existence of the whole depend upon the orderly cooperation and interdependence of its parts, but the whole exercises a measure of determinative control over its parts".

If science was for men, "culture" (that is, defined narrowly as good literature, theatre and fine art) was left to the women. Both Steinbeck and Norris seem to have considered culture (and for Norris, at least, this word embraced the "eastern" and English novel of manners too) as something feminine that happened indoors, confining and restricting the man of action, like Miss Watson taking Huck Finn into the closet to pray. According to Benson, Steinbeck "felt himself surrounded by female authority. When his mother was off doing something cultural, as she often was, there was at least one older sister around that had to be reckoned with." In a striking reversal of contemporary European practice, Steinbeck's family decided to put the daughters through college, "but let him fend pretty much for himself". But it was with his sister Mary that he read the Arthurian tales and "went into the fields with swords, cardboard helmets, and the pony, Jill, to search for the Grail". At Stanford too, literature was mediated by women - Professor Margery Bailey and Edith Mirrielees, a sort of hard-cap, soft-cop act still legendary in the Stanford English department today. The only long-term friend with whom Steinbeck felt easy discussing his work, and from whom he accepted criticism, was his agent Elizabeth Otis.

It seems likely that when Steinbeck experienced imaginative literature through the medium of women, it was thereby rendered suspect. Not that he disliked women - he seems to have formed and kept a number of entirely

satisfactory relationships with them - but that his own culture (in the wider sense) assigned them a paradoxical status. They were dependent, yet commanding, both weak and strong. Even when literature and women collaborated to move out of doors and liberate the imagination, as in the Arthurian fantasies with Mary, the result was insubstantial - precisely because "only" the imagination was freed. The real business out of doors was the search for objective, verifiable specimens on the seashore with Ed Ricketts and other male companions.

California ceased to be Steinbeck's home in the 1940s. From then on, when he wasn't travelling for pleasure or to report on the war in Europe, he divided his time between a country house on Long Island and a town house in, of all places, Manhattan. It is tempting to speculate whether the uncertain status of imaginative literature in his home environment - at least as perceived by him - was one of the reasons for Steinbeck's leaving California. Benson offers more convincing reasons, like the hostility of the author's home town to his literary profession. When President Roosevelt personally asked him to write a book on the training of American Second World War bomber pilots, General Hap Arnold wrote to Steinbeck's local draft board requesting a brief deferment from the call-up while his case could be considered for a commission. Always the final arbiter in such appeals, the local board turned down the request. "[They] couldn't figure how you who had always written such trash", Arnold wrote Steinbeck, "could write anything that could be of benefit to the Army."

But maybe both reasons are different aspects of the same cause. In any case, he didn't go home again, for any length of time or with any degree of contentment. Even a return visit to Cannery Row produced a mild case of food poisoning. And it is often overlooked how little Steinbeck's best work depends on local colour. Even the Okie accents in *The Grapes of Wrath* are more of a generalized American poor-folks talk than a dialect specific to a region. A brief journey to Norway was all he needed to write *The Moon is Down*, his undervalued novel about the German occupation of a small Scandinavian town. Thurber wrote in the *New Republic* that the book treated the Nazis so gently, it might help America lose the war, but those actually suffering the occupation found it entirely convincing. The book was smuggled into the occupied countries; the Danish resistance produced cyclostyled copies.

And the most memorable details from Steinbeck's books are not local in place so much as

in scale; they are the geographically non-specific, yet very pointed vignettes of the good journalist, in which the great is contained in the small: the range boss's son in *Of Mice and Men* who wears a glove filled with vaseline to keep his hand "soft for his wife"; the cars for sale in *The Grapes of Wrath* with sawdust in their differentials so that the poor Okies won't hear the worn ring-gear; the mayor in *The Moon is Down* baving the hair in his ears trimmed before he goes to meet the German invaders of his small town.

Images like these leap over the immediate scene to register conflict or sympathy that is universally human. *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck's greatest American success and his best novel, was also much admired in Russia, wrongly, as a "progressive" book - that is, a critique of the capitalist system. It was neither that, nor a documentary of the dust bowl migrations to California. In America, I suspect, it spoke to quite another sense of the national self: the fear of wandering and captivity that had formed some of the worst (though also some of the most exhilarating) moments of the Americans' experience in settling the Continent: the break-up of the extended family; the geographical and social displacement of migration. "Officially" the values advanced in that book may be those of the voice-over calling for bigger units to replace the smaller, but emotionally the weight lies with the tragedy of the Joad family disintegrating (as Ma Joad points out again and again) as first the grandparents die on the journey West, then the son and son-in-law desert, and finally Rosashaw's baby is stillborn. It is not the coming future that thrills, but the disappearing past that lacerates, the loss to the bankers' tractors of the physiocratic small-holding that raised generations of Joads. The politics of *The Grapes of Wrath* - or at least that part of it which convinces the reader - are anti-federalist, not socialist.

It is clear that *The Grapes of Wrath* owes its American popularity at least partly to its approximation to that perennially favourite American form, the captivity narrative. Like Mrs Rowlandson's account of her kidnapping by the Indians (first published in 1682) and many other examples including *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), *The Grapes of Wrath* celebrates the family by putting the reader in mind of its fragility, and explores the paradox of a wilderness that is both free of culture and a theatre of constraint. The Joads journey, like many Americans before them, to what they imagine will be a promised land, only to find themselves less free than when they started out, harried by deputy sheriffs, destitute, flooded out of the freight-car to which their "home" has shrunk.

And this is where the California dimension re-enters, oddly transmuted. For the truth is that California was cultivated long before the greater part of Oklahoma. California may have

served for years as the easterners' stock image of the prodigious cultural growth, but it is Oklahoma that was settled, literally, in one afternoon, on April 22, 1889, when a cannon was fired to inaugurate a land rush in which almost two million acres of the territory were claimed before nightfall. It was these settlers, for the most part, who went West in the 1930s; indeed it was they, with their intensive, New-England methods of cultivation, who helped to cause the Dust Bowl in the first place. Yet Steinbeck, whose family had been in California for three generations, deliberately placed the origins of his Okie family in Salinas. In the extreme east of Oklahoma, where some whites had settled as early as the middle of the nineteenth century.

In other words, Steinbeck gave the Joads a rootedness uncharacteristic of most Okies, to intensify their sense of loss of both home and tradition. The California to which they travel is paradoxical in this respect: one of the most beautiful landscapes and seascapes in the world with one of the best climates - a natural paradise - that is already overplotted: fenced, chartered, patrolled. Culture stifles nature, rather than collaborating with it in what we are supposed to imagine was once the way in eastern Oklahoma. It doesn't matter whether this is really true of California (though to middle-aged natives of the state who can remember Silicon Valley when it was still plum orchards, time does seem to move awfully fast there). The point is that Steinbeck felt it to be true. Even back in his teens, California agribusiness had become highly industrialized, none more so than the Spreckels sugar-beet operation for which he worked in between studying at Stanford. It is into this larger envelope of paradoxical culture - a force that both refines and destroys - that Steinbeck's uncertainty about writing imaginative literature fits: whether he could do it well; whether he should do it at all.

Jackson Benson's biography does not attempt to redress the standard critical assessment of Steinbeck's work. *The Grapes of Wrath* remains, after all, his best book, and apart from the journalism (which still reads very freshly and is due for reevaluation) there is probably not much to be said in favour of what he wrote after his one masterpiece. As well to expect *The Minister's Wooing* to match *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer* is unevenly written, too long and lacks narrative sweep, yet good will and honesty pervade it. Even where Benson is not sure if his facts support the construction he puts upon them, he refuses to trim the evidence to suit his case. Several interpretations sometimes seem possible, and the reader is left with a perplexing multiplicity of argumentative directions. The result is a book with which one can argue and even disagree, but not easily dispense.

Gatsby's Hydroplane

Nights that summer he built the hydroplane. He had dreamed long enough that ride in Maine, how he cut like a perfect blade through stars frozen on the lake, how wind tore from far mountains across his face and the silver-tipped comet-tail flared from the motor's props.

On two sawhorses he stretched a plywood sheet, rounded one end, notched, bolted, cradled it to a taut hull. He cut out ribs from pine, nailed transom and keelson to make a spine, screwed thin panels on top and sides, glued, fiberglassed, then painted them white and blue.

It looked pure American in the pond. The light bow bent upward but never planed. The motor shook, sputtered. Hauled to the barn, dunked in a water-barrel, its valves flushed clean, it drowned again in perfect monotone as once before skating through stars in Maine.

HENRY HART

The birth of the meaningful

Rodney Needham

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS
Le Regard éloigné
382pp. Paris: Plon, 95fr.
2259 010075

There is a poignancy about this latest collection of pieces by Claude Lévi-Strauss. It marks the termination of a university career extending over half a century, and it prompts an assessment of what the author has achieved theoretically in that period.

Le Regard éloigné does not in itself provide such a retrospect, though it does impart a melancholy tone to the question. It consists of twenty-two papers dating for the most part from 1971 to 1982: four have been modified or adapted since their first publication, four are published for the first time. The chapters are assorted under the headings Innate and Acquired: Family, Marriage, Kinship; Environment and its Representations; Beliefs, Myths, and Rites; and Constraints and Liberty. The author regards the volume, which is dedicated to the memory of Roman Jakobson, as forming a unity: it can be taken, he suggests, as a minor treatise in social anthropology or as an introduction in that discipline.

It might well have been called *Anthropologie structurale trois*, a title that the author decided against, but the alleged unity is hardly patent and the pedagogical function is much impaired by grove and typical weaknesses of concept and method. The imaginative incentive is gone, and in its place there is an appearance of just going through the motions. Lévi-Strauss writes of structuralism as having passed out of fashion, but he none the less continues to resort to "the structuralist method", an exigent procedure which consists merely in the establishment of binary oppositions. As for the style, a discredited idiom still asserts that Fiji is "haunted" by an elementary structure (whatever that is) and rattles a "nostalgia" for it. We have been here before, long ago.

The quality of argument displayed is especially disappointing. A major example is Lévi-Strauss's renewed analysis of the Wikmunkan system. This is decidedly a technical issue, and it would be tedious, in a literary journal, to specify the numerous defects which invalidate the author's statements about the structure of this society. Two important matters, however, call for notice. One is that Lévi-Strauss fails to cite an entire set of articles which happen to controvert his original analysis of Wikmunkan society. The other is that his defence of his own interpretation (rejecting, to be precise, the postulation by others of a two-line system) is premised on an elementary confusion of a descent line with an exogamous clan. As for his paradoxical and internally contradictory assertions about elementary and complex structures, and a supposed "compromise" between them in this instance, the less said about them the better. It is much to be regretted that the author should once more have published a damaging demonstration that in the field of kinship studies, to take up the conclusions to *Elementary Structures of Kinship* by Francis Korn, he is actually "unimpressive as an analyst" and that his theories are "regularly refuted by the facts".

Another prominent example of Lévi-Strauss's argumentation, posing again a resolvable issue, comes from the analysis of myth. It is a point-by-point rejoinder, for once, to the contentions of a critic. The subject is the significance of claims in certain myths of the North-west Coast, and the critic is Marvin Harris. Lévi-Strauss makes his defence with his usual adroitness, not to mention evasion and sophistry, and with a tenacious concentration on points of bivalence and ethnographic detail. At first one is reminded of the sequence in *Seven Samurai* in which the tall samurai challenges Kyuzo, the master swordsman. The reader is inclined to mutter, with Kanbei, the samurai comicaliser: "How senseless. It's obvious what will happen." But lo! this encounter it does not. Harris's style of thought may be rather obtuse, and he has a blundering mode of advance, but all this says it is he who survives. Lévi-Strauss, reasonably enough, does not reproduce Harris's article, but a collection of dialogue with rejoinder must clearly accord the

field to Harris. Yet this outcome too only supports a critical case already made, and decisively, by others.

Harris glancingly cites, but does not materially adduce, the paper "Aadiwal Crumbles" (*American Ethnologist*, 1976) by L.L. Thomas, J.Z. Kronenfeld, and D.B. Kronenfeld. Lévi-Strauss declines to cite it, even though he reuses the analysis of "La Geste d'Asdiwal" in the present volume. No wonder, in a way, for this critique also demonstrates that Lévi-Strauss's method is arbitrary and that on occasion he distorts the text with "unwarranted



A human bust carved in a block of coral, reproduced from *The Turrett Collection* of A. C. Haddon. A descriptive catalogue by David R. Moore (1909) with 79 plates. British Museum Publications, £17. 07141 1569 X).

generalizations" and even "outright misrepresentations". His theoretical assertions are unclear or highly contradictory, and his argument, in addition to being circular in places, is internally inconsistent and by any reading fails to account for the data. These contentions, so long as they stand unrefuted, quite undermine Lévi-Strauss's proposition, in the work under review, that "the sociological formula adopted by a culture is accompanied by a latent consciousness of the opposite formula", and the devastating implications of so cogent a critique for his theory of myth are simply eluded by silence.

This manoeuvre is not surprising, unfortunately, for it is not Lévi-Strauss's usual practice to take serious notice of arguments that are critical of his own. This failing is evident also under the rubric of modes of thought, the third fundamental topic to which he has made prominent contributions, especially in *La Pensée sauvage*. It is now more than fifteen years since André Régner, in "De la théorie des groupes à la pensée sauvage", published a comprehensive and radical investigation into Lévi-Strauss's ideas in this field. He found invalidating considerations in the use of one impressive concept after another: group, transformation, structure, logic, correspondence - all are employed in ways that are approximate, arbitrary, and only metaphorically connected with the precision of the exact sciences from which the terminology is adopted. "In the end, the ideas of M. Lévi-Strauss on the 'Pensée sauvage' are a set of hypotheses that are unverified and for the most part unverifiable and that darken a little more the understanding of primitive mentality and consequently our own."

Now any grand undertaking is bound to attract the cavils of the captious, and often enough these can be ignored. The dogs bark; the caravan moves on. But the critiques just cited are not trivial: they are crucial. It is dismaying, especially to those who think the undertaking important, that Lévi-Strauss should proceed, as he does here, as though they were negligible. The adverse commentators named are not malign or misguided or incompetent; and it is certainly not good enough, so far as they are concerned, for Lévi-Strauss to pronounce that "only those who practise structural analysis as a daily task can clearly conceive the significance and the scope of their enterprise". There are very worrying questions of concept and method to be taken up, and Lévi-Strauss lets down the discipline of comparativism, as well as himself, by being so cavalier with them.

Beyond these particular discontents, moreover, there is a far more general question: Lévi-Strauss has achieved an astounding popular success that only the petty would grudge him. What is the reason for this wide acclaim? This is a notoriously puzzling matter,

for elementary structures and mythologies and the savage mind are not intrinsically so alluring as to account for the extent of the response. The source of the attraction must be sought rather in the idiosyncrasies of Lévi-Strauss himself, and to understand them calls for an analysis of his own modes of thought and expression that has scarcely begun. If he is not very good at analysis - and really it is not his line - what is it about his approach that has worked so strongly on other people's minds? Some commentators have alluded to a "poetic" quality in his writing, and his very obscurities can be seen as enigmatic and hence profound: there are intimations of grand mysteries, refractions of perennial insights, echoes of oracular utterances. His vision is hemetrical, and his writings have prospered because they promise to reveal what has been hidden, the occult factors by which human experience is shaped.

In *Le Regard éloigné* there is a biographical note that makes a curious connection with such concerns. It may even lead to the explanation of some of the most perplexing features of Lévi-Strauss's thought. He is describing New York as it was when he lived there in the 1940s. (An odd conjunction incidentally - mid carrying an older implication - is that he and Claude Shannon lived in the same apartment house: "A few metres from the other, he was creating Cybernetics and I was writing *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*.".) The point to seize the attention is that he used to be frequently in the company of Max Ernst, André Breton, and Georges Duthuit. At once certain correspondences present themselves.

Lévi-Strauss has declared that he is not responsible for his books: they get written through him. In the manifesto of Surrealism, Breton observed of a Surrealist writer that "he does not consider himself as the author of his book". No doubt this is because in the latter case it is the product of automatic "thought-

writing", but there are other connections with Lévi-Strauss. The Surrealist is the vehicle of a psychic automatism which reveals "the real functioning of thought". The first characteristic of this kind of expression is its extreme degree of arbitrariness, making indeed an impression of "immediate absurdity". Nearly thirty years later, Breton affirmed that the whole point of Surrealism is to grasp the *matériau prima* of language; automatic writing directs a spotlight on the region "in which myths come into being". The object is to go right back, at one bound, to "the birth of the meaningful", and the spirit which makes this possible is none other than that which has always animated "occult philosophy". In coming to terms with the world, the great means that man has at his disposal is "poetic intuition".

Set against these precepts of Surrealism, and in view especially of the association with André Breton, Lévi-Strauss's work exhibits remarkable parallels. The attribution of a poetic quality appears more exact than metaphorical. If he is careless with scholarly data, this is because he trusts to his intuition more than to analysis in arriving at primary operations of thought; if he is arbitrary, to the point even of absurdity, it is because this very characteristic is inherent in the real functioning of the mind; if he concentrates his main energies on myths, the reason is that in them can be detected the original forms and transformations of meaning.

Assessed in this way, Lévi-Strauss's work shifts suddenly, as though in a kaleidoscope, into a new pattern. Viewed as a surrealist enterprise, it evokes a response liberated from the confinements of exactitude, logic, and scholarly responsibility. We are in what Breton described as "la région où s'érige le désir sans contrainte". To proffer so much, while still maintaining the semblance of analytical precision and methodical advance, might indeed be accounted a surreal triumph.

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A tease among Tories

Hugo Young

NORMAN ST JOHN-STEVAS
The Two Clites
288pp. Faber. £12.95.
0571 30836

Norman St John-Stevaa, being an articulate enthusiast about not only culture but religion, is rare among Conservative politicians. He has always appeared to be something of an outsider. This is paradoxical, since no one is more dedicated to the party, very few of whose number could put into words with half Mr St John-Stevaa's romantic feeling the reasons why they are Tories. No one, either, made more successful efforts at key moments to retain links with the party's shifting leadership factions. But ultimately, he is different from the mainstream: more florid, more amused, more detached, more conscious of a life after mortal politics.

This book is an expression of its author's politically unconventional interests. It is not, regrettably, an autobiography. Tantalizing glimpses are offered, mainly in footnotes, of Mr St John-Stevaa's eccentric suits, his meetings with royalty, and conversations with successive popes who have been the beneficiaries of his opinions. One could have done with mere of them, since he has obviously got around. But it is on the arts, on parliamentary reform and on religion that he concentrates: with a heavy emphasis, in the first two, on his own contribution, which has been substantial. On the arts, he was a worthy Tory successor to Lord Eccles. Cultivated and tigerish, he imposed himself in a few short months under Mr Heath, and then managed to protect the arts budget with extraordinary success against the worst Thatcherite depredations on public spending. For any thorough account of British arts policy in the last fifteen years, this book will supply valuable source material, showing, in particular, the highly personalized view Mr St John-Stevaa took of his job as minister.

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HAMISH
HAMILTON

His reforming role as Leader of the House of Commons was also very personal. The enhancement of select committees has added greatly to parliament's scope for scrutiny of the executive, if it wishes to make use of it. The decisiveness with which Mr St John-Stevaa slipped this reform past a cabinet which did not unanimously want it, but which was distracted by higher matters in the new euphoria of power in 1979, remains a lesson in benign political opportunism. But here one touches the weakness of the book. It gives a thorough account of the reasons for this change – with apt quotations from the author's deathless hero, Bagehot – and fully describes the public events which surrounded it. As with its reflections on the arts, in fact, there is a somewhat repetitive element: the book drifts unsystematically between the style of the historian and that of the essayist/philosopher. But new, enlightening detail – about, for example, why Mrs Thatcher herself was so sceptical of institutional change – is missing. This is a general omission which makes the political content of the book disappointing. The author is a tease. We hear, for example, that he was "rumoured" to be an intermediary between Mr Heath and Mr Jeremy Thorpe after the February 1974 election. He doesn't say whether he was; and, if he was, throws no light whatever on that intriguing moment when coalition government loomed. Nor does he tell us as much as he might about the speed with which his intimate allegiance to Mr Heath switched to an equally cordial association with Mrs Thatcher.

When it comes to the heart of politics, Mr St John-Stevaa is positively evasive. He describes, affecting, the pain of being sacked from the cabinet in January 1981. He recounts, at considerable length, his own philosophy of moderate Conservatism, which recalls all those coded speeches he and his fellow-dissidents in cabinet used to make about economic policy. But the sting has gone out of them, now that the policy seems to be succeeding. The code is even more heavily masked, because, one must suspect, this former "wet" senses that his criticisms will meet with less of a popular echo than they did from 1980 to 1983.

What the wets need to explain is why their reading of Thatcherism – which was essentially that it would not secure public consent – proved wrong. As a reflective Conservative and a competent journalist, Mr St John-Stevaa would have been the ideal person, at the ideal moment, to get to the heart of this. One would happily have traded his last 100 pages of spiritual counselling, sincere and unusual though they are from a politician, for the inside story of the political argument. Without it, this book is of pleasant quality but marginal value.

Nora King's *The Grimstons of Gortanbury* (175pp. Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore. £11.95. 0 85033 474 8) traces the history of the Grimston family from the time of Edward Grimston, ambassador to Burgundy during the fifteenth century, to that of his present-day descendants, the Earls of Verulam.

Ducal divagations

Toby Fitton

JOHN COLVILLE
Strange Inheritance
204pp. Salisbury: Michael Russell. £8.95.
085955 1040

The strange inheritance of the title is that of the present Duke of Portland, a distinguished businessman and former ambassador, who came into his dukedom in old age; though the last of his line, he is still one of the more distinguished holders of the title. Although ducal in theme, Sir John Colville's book is by no means a matter of grand dynastic narrative, but rather a study of the way in which some stately but dim genes were shaken up by two unexpected liaisons into producing an unconventional line very different from what might otherwise in the mid-nineteenth century have become "the most inert of a very respectable line of King Lords".

Genetic determinism can be a deceptive trap in family biography, but Sir John makes his

A line in decline

C. M. Woodhouse

PIERS BRENDON
Winston Churchill: A brief life
234pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
0436068125
BRIAN ROBERTS
Randolph: A study of Churchill's son
392pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95.
0241 111099

A life-long friend of the Churchill family once said that "you see all Winston's faults the first time you meet him; then you spend the rest of your life finding out his good qualities". Most people, talking about Randolph, would stop at the first half of that judgment. To do him justice, he saw the hopelessness of his position as the great man's son. He once illustrated it with a melancholy anecdote about the son of Enrico Caruso, who rashly chose to be a singer. Randolph, too, tried to imitate his father, whom he idolized. But how much of his father had Randolph the talent to imitate? The answer is: only his reckless courage, his loyalty to friends, and his faults.

These two books make an odd pair to come out simultaneously. The biography of Randolph is more than half as long again as that of Winston, and costs just under 30 per cent more. But Mr Roberts is the first, and perhaps the last, biographer of Randolph, whereas there is no room for another major biography of Winston. Mr Brendon has wisely settled for a "brief life", which is in effect a brilliant sketch for a portrait – a more sympathetic replacement of the lost Sutherland, perhaps.

Both biographers rely heavily on anecdote, which sharpens the contrast between the two Churchills. Most of the anecdotes about Randolph are pointless and tasteless. When they show some wit, it is of a schoolboy level. Roberts gives an example from a telephone conversation between Randolph and Beaverbrook's valet. When he was told that "the Lord" was walking in St James's Park, Randolph wittily replied: "On the water, I presume?" At least this is an example of Randolph in his milder guise – neither the drunkard nor the lecher nor the bully.

The anecdotal life of Winston is another matter. It is sometimes a shaky basis for biography, because he attracted apocryphal anecdotes as Oscar Wilde attracted epigrams he never uttered. But the unquestionably authentic anecdotes are flashes of dazzling illumination, often pregnant with historical significance. The most memorable of all tells of the one occasion when the fate of the nation depended on something almost unbearable to Winston – his silence. When Neville Chamberlain decided to resign in 1940, he first told Halifax and Churchill, the only rivals for the succession, in the presence of his Chief Whip. The Chief Whip at once proposed that Halifax should succeed him. Churchill had been warned by Brendan Bracken (whom Mr Churchill regarded as his evil genius, and

others as his son) that if he spoke first, he would ruin his chances. So he remained silent while Halifax brooded and finally admitted the impossibility of his own succession. Thus we were saved from a negotiated peace with Hitler.

From a pattern of such anecdotes Brendon builds a convincing picture of the great man. His judgment is good and his style succinct. His view of Churchill is entirely without hagiography. He sharply exposes the rudeness, the cruelty, the impatience, the ill temper, the inconsistency, the gluttony, the selfishness, the philistinism, the wars and all. He does not palliate the flirtation with fascism, the toleration of Japanese and Italian aggression, the taste for "raffish cronies", the delight in war for its own sake, the errors of judgment over the Gold Standard, India, the Abdication.

Even the oratory is not spared, nor are *The World Crisis* and *The Second World War*, which are essentially exercises in oratory. "Churchill's greatest single contribution to the [1939-45] war was his oratory" – yes, but he was always inclined to think that a problem dealt with oratorically was a problem solved. Or, as Attlee said when asked what Churchill did to win the war: "Talk about it". But of course he did that and vastly more, as Attlee well knew. In 1940 every speech he made was the equivalent of a battle won. After 1940 the oratory palled, but he was still an incomparable great leader, if also a maddening one. He had ten new ideas a day, of which three were probably good ones. The problem for his staff was to find out which three, while Churchill mercilessly forced them to work out all ten in detail.

It is hard to say anything new about so well-documented a character, but Brendon succeeds once or twice. He notes that in changed circumstances Churchill changed not only his mind but his physique. He publishes an interesting map of Churchill's world-wide travels, which shows that he knew nothing of first hand of Asia east of India or of the Pacific except for the Californian sea-board. For a man who depended so much on personal impressions, this helps to explain why his account of the war in the Far East (where he never held the centre of the stage) is so perfunctory, and why he was so indifferent to the susceptibility of Australia and New Zealand.

If he had been born into a later age, Winston Churchill might have been no more successful than Randolph. Mr Brendon describes him "trusting his star" in countless scrapes and adventures; he quotes Winston speaking in the crisis of his feeling that "over me beat invincible wings". Like his idol, Napoleon, Churchill had a sense of invincible luck. But again like Napoleon, his greatest luck was to be born into the right world at the right time. Being a misanthropic man, not least towards his scapegoat son, he would have been grateful to Mr Roberts for his sympathetic account of the inhabitant of a later and different world, who had no wings to beat over him and not much of a star to trust.

bastards), but her wards were given all, bringing appropriate to their paternity.

Ruth, the daughter of this odd liaison, proved to be an innately rebellious and unconventional grand-daughter, combining a background of Victorian richness (which proved to be rather precarious) with "advanced" political views that embraced the Webbs, the early Fabians, and "General" Drummond the Suffragist leader. In spite of her marriage to a Civil Service-Bentley husband of easy-going, conservative views, she remained sincere in her political opinions, to which in old age she added an eccentric but assertive theology. Life Force. Ruth died in 1948, characteristically at the end: the present Duke of Portland is her son.

The story contains some elements of Sackville-West's *Peppa* and Magdalen Gifford's *Marjia Pappa*, but even though it contains some very interesting information (not least on the present Duke of Portland's diplomatic career), there are too many necessary digressions to turn a group of miscellaneous biographical notes into a well-told

Evidences of originality

Robert Browning

ALEXANDER KAZHDAN and SIMON FRANKLIN
Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries
299pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 246563
CYRIL MANGO
Byzantium and Its Images: History and culture of the Byzantine Empire and its heritage
360pp. Variorum Reprints. £28.
086078 1399

The literature of Byzantium, wrote Paul Lemerle, was "a literature without a public and without problems". For Hans-Georg Beck it is an escape from reality. Perhaps all literature is in some sense escapist. But if it is true, as Beck's teacher Dölger once wrote, that the Byzantines attached no value to "originality of content, freedom of invention, or freedom in the choice of subject-matter" then it seems a pretty poor escape-route.

Byzantine society has traditionally been seen as conservative, though there has been little agreement on what precisely was being conserved. Only a few years ago Günther Weiss argued that no significant structural changes occurred in Byzantine society throughout its thousand years of existence, an assertion which many historians will find hard to swallow. Most societies, or at any rate their dominant groups, like to think of themselves as unchanging embodiments of peculiar virtues. When Alaric the Goth and Gaiseric the Vandal were sacking Rome, Roman schoolboys still learned that their people's mission was "to rule the nations, to impose peace, to spare the yielding and defeat the proud", and there are those today who still like to think that Britannia rules the waves. The Byzantines imposed their own vision of themselves upon generations of historians, and thus isolated the history of their society from that of their neighbours and contemporaries. Their literature, too, was read as an unending restatement of a

bandful of conventional clichés, and those who studied it concentrated on questions of genre and expression, confident that there could be no significant individuality of content.

Alexander Kazhdan has been foremost as an innovator in Byzantine studies. In *People and Power in Byzantium* (1982) he and Gilles Constable asked questions about Byzantine society which called for new insights and new methods of research. For twenty years he has been arguing that we ourselves have been blinded by the formal façade of Byzantine literature, that Byzantine men of letters could and did use conventional means to express individual points of view, and that we can learn to understand their message just as we can that of other medieval literatures.

Most of his studies of Byzantine authors were published in Russian, in the pages of *Vizantijskij Vremennik* and other Soviet journals. The present volume comprises six articles, updated and revised by the author, and elegantly and sensitively translated by Simon Franklin. They are preceded by an introduction in which Kazhdan surveys changing attitudes to the society, literature and conceptual world of the Byzantines in the course of the past century.

The writers discussed belong, with one exception, to the second half of the twelfth century, an age which he believes to have been as fertile in innovation in the Greek world as it was in the West. They include the poet Theodore Prodromus (who also had a certain talent, not mentioned by Kazhdan, for satirical prose); the scholar, bishop, historian and publicist Eustathius of Thessalonica; the courtier and civil servant Gregory Antiochus; the historian Nicetas Choniates; and two commentators on public affairs at the end of the century, Nicephorus Chrysoberges and Nicholas Mesarites, whose accounts of the same events display profoundly different relations between the author and his subject-matter. The odd man out is the historian Michael Attalates, whose history of his own times was written about 1080.

What emerges in each case is a re-evaluation of the writer, perhaps as the spokesman of some social group, but always as an individual with discernible, albeit sometimes for us only vaguely discernible, likes and dislikes, values and attitudes. Prodromus, often depicted as a glib and mindless versifier in the service of the powerful, becomes an example of "humane and compassionate sensitivity to individual feeling", while remaining a court poet. Kazhdan is perhaps pushing things a little too far when he says that "his more intimate, and perhaps deeper, sympathies lie with the 'little man', the man whose fate it is to suffer and endure in a vast and far from perfect world". Was not Prodromus' problem rather that the structure of patronage on which he depended did not leave much room for "humane and compassionate sensitivity"?

The longest and most interesting chapter is that on Eustathius. It is partly a matter of the richness of the material, partly of Eustathius' complex and "modern" character. The contradictions of his stance are brought out, in particular his apparently sincere support of the authoritarian and expansionist government of Manuel I and his "feudal" ideal, along with his sharply polemical criticism of many of Manuel's policies. Kazhdan might also have contrasted Eustathius' reverence for the archaic and convoluted language of Byzantine "Atticism" with the lively and sympathetic interest in the language and life of the common people which appears in his interminable and learned commentaries on Homer. Eustathius is revealed, not as a pedantic windbag, but as a strong personality, commenting on and reacting to the changing world in which he lived.

The study of the two accounts of the revolt of John Comnenus the Fat in 1200 shows Chrysoberges carefully avoiding any authorial presence – this is the conventional Byzantine narrative mode – while Mesarites from the beginning asserts his own real involvement in the events which he describes and records his personal observations, precise, clear and sometimes ironically unconventional.

Kazhdan is commendably cautious in identifying social groups and forces reflected in literature. His studies are meant to be examples of how new approaches can lead to new insights rather than as definitive analyses. Indeed the greatest virtue of this fascinating, if uneven, book is that almost every page suggests fields for further research. We would like to know more about literary patronage. What were the relations between Eirene the Sebastocratorissa or Anna Comnena and the writers whom they encouraged and supported? Did their protégés form self-conscious groups? How did such groups define themselves? Were their readers divided also? Was Byzantine society as devoid of internal structure as Kazhdan and Constable suggest in *People and Power*? How did literature serve to establish and maintain authority, and what kind of authority – that of learning, of birth, of wealth, of power? Why is there so little sign in twelfth-century literature of the kind of spiritual authority exercised by Symeon in the early eleventh century and by the Hesychasts in the fourteenth? The questions raised by the book are endless. There are not many books on Byzantine literature of which this can be said.

Kazhdan rightly counts Cyril Mango among those who have contributed most to the new view of Byzantium. *Byzantium and Its Image* reprints eighteen studies first published between 1960 and 1982, some of which are not easily accessible. Many of these are detailed discussions of particular problems or texts. But others, such as Professor Mango's London Inaugural lecture "Byzantine Literature as a 'Distorting Mirror'", his Birmingham paper "Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium", and his Dumbarton Oaks study "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder" deal with large problems of continuity and innovation in Byzantine society. Mango's sceptically critical approach leads him sometimes to treat the Byzantine self-image as wholly fictitious and to neglect the dialectical interplay of old and new. But he is always incisive and thought-provoking, and never dull.

The Power of the Poet
by Robert Browning
Edited by John G. Mitchell and Margaret Smith
Oxford University Press

Keats and Coleridge
by Christopher Ricks
Oxford University Press

William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision
by Jonathan Wordsworth
Oxford University Press

William Wordsworth: The Poet as Critic
by Jonathan Wordsworth
Oxford University Press

William Wordsworth: The Poet as Critic
by Jonathan Wordsworth
Oxford University Press

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The Oxford Shakespeare
General Editor: Stanley Wells

Shakespeare's Sonnets
by Andrew Gurr
Oxford University Press

Shakespeare's Sonnets
by Andrew Gurr
Oxford University Press

Shakespeare's Sonnets
by Andrew Gurr
Oxford University Press

OXFORD

Nineteen Eighty-Four

In the land of Doubt and Rumour

Paul Keegan

DAVID WHELDON
The Course of Instruction
172pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.
0370 30995

Half-way through *The Course of Instruction* the hero, Alexander, attempts to take stock of his position:

He had come here in answer to a letter and had found nothing but uncertainty. He had no ally. He had found no clue that might help him. He had found nobody whose judgment he could trust. The point of the letter had been anything but vague; now it was shifting and diffuse but there could still be no doubt about its importance. . . . It was difficult to be rational about what had taken place. Only a disordered sequence of the day's events came back to him.

In a sense that ought to serve as a description of the plot, both because this novel systematically questions the status of all acts of description, and because its events resist being described in such a manner as to sound possible. The letter received on the opening page advises Alexander to attend an unspecified course of instruction in another town. Supposing it to be official, he complies. If the hero of David Wheldon's earlier novel, *The Viaduct*, felt like the spectator of "some blackly repetitive but disjointed morality play where the moral was beyond finding", his successor and namesake is both spectator and stage-figure in a drama which enacts his own future as though it were someone else's.

In the house where instruction is to be offered, Alexander encounters only servants without masters and supernumeraries without

function. From here on, his search for an official course of instruction which has yet to begin constitutes in effect an unofficial course of instruction which has already begun.

The hero may lack allies but he does not lack advice: he is as over-advised as Alice (with whom he has affinities) was in Wonderland – notably at the hands of a Mr Tompkins, a lodger who is not a servant only by virtue of the fact that, unlike the servants, he answers to any name by which he is called. He taxes Alexander for failing to respond to the enigmatic customs of the house other than in terms of past experience, and for failing to perceive the validity of contradictory interpretations in a situation where the facts are allusive or incomplete.

In this sense the novel is a fictional meditation on an epistemological hobby-horse, rather than a Kafkaesque parable about the law, its givers and its tablets. Instead of a bureaucratic nightmare, the house is merely the subterranean world of appearances. Tompkins is the leading voice of Doubt, the servants a chorus of Rumour, and Alexander a naively soul-searching Pilgrim in a forlorn land. Such readings are encouraged by the painting of St George and the Dragon which dominates the novel's mental landscape.

At different times Alexander gazes on three paintings, and each is central to the novel's concerns. In a rather Jamesian manner, problems of knowing shade into problems of seeing, and a complex narrative is condensed into the simpler, more exemplary terms of a dramatic tableau. For Alexander, the paintings he encounters reflect uncannily the ambiguities of his own situation. They are all either physically damaged or iconographically incomplete.

Thus in the painting of St George doing battle, the dragon is absent from the scene: "As he looked at the picture in the failing light he saw that his first interpretation was not the only one which could be made, nor even the most obvious . . . the imagined dragon could have been any adversary, real or unreal."

The impossibility of biographical truth and the notion that nothing can be described as it happened haunt Tompkins. When he attempts to explain the local legend behind the paintings, he wavers between versions and repeatedly corrects details. When Alexander drafts from memory a copy of the letter, Tompkins argues that "the original letter had an open neutrality: the facsimile you made was an enclosed and inward-looking copy of the original. Each sentence was qualified by doubt."

Tompkins accuses language itself ("all words have bias"), and the novel explores this anxiety in a prose that is spartan and scrupulous. The contingencies of place and person are couched in the idiom of bare information, but as if without playing a part in any language game of giving information. As a result, the reader is placed in a position of uneasy equanimity, between noticing and not noticing details which seem to exist for their own sake. The imponderable status of these low-keyed, apparently purposeless descriptive acts or omissions is part of the novel's overall preoccupation with epistemological doubts.

Beyond all this one suspects also an urge on the part of the author to give the matter and manner of fiction a purer impulse. The result is somewhat obstinious and too uniform in its pacing, but it is a strange and deceptively unemphatic work.

Lean times, fighting flab in Earl's Court

Christopher Hawtree

EDWARD FENTON
Scorched Earth
216pp. Sinclair Browne. £7.95.
0863000444
SUE LIMB
Up The Garden Path
231pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.
0370 309957

Edward Fenton's *Scorched Earth* has been awarded the annual prize funded by Clive Sinclair's computer firm for "a previously unpublished novel combining high literary quality with contemporary social or political relevance". Quite what one is to understand by this lost phrase is never certain: it would be an eccentric judge that gave money to, say, *King the Aspidochelone* or *Cardinal Pirelli* was among the candidates. Although concerned with the condition of England, and in particular London, tends to swamp Fenton's novel's times, there is much in it that reveals a beguiling sardonic tone and comic inventiveness.

It is a tale of four people struggling against all that lack of money brings with it in a increasingly disagreeable place. If sewers are longer exactly annoy the air, it is certainly not by the noise and fumes of motorcycles, such as the one which belongs to Dan, who shares a flat with Sue and Roiface. As he roams around the capital on various errands of frustrated rebellion, he can be grudgingly allusive: "I will not rest, nor will my engine grow cold, until I am at the wheel have learnt to drive, a sold their cars, or taken a final plunge through the windscreen."

The narrative, which is cast in brief episodes and describes the way in which the wanderer Chris accepts an invitation to join this errand household ("you could sleep in the corridor, under the kitchen table – I mean if you're not too fussy about crumbs in your bed"), is punctuated by a laconic, world-weary dialogue. "Alright (sic) is drawn out almost with the frequency of the definite article."

Survival in their world involves the characters in dilemmas like that of the folk singers who recorded protest songs for a company out to discover that its principal investments were in Lockheed. If the dialtires become a life-wearisome and the ending, with the motorcycle and drugs combining to provoke an apologetic, vengeful visit from the police, is rather forced, such drawbacks are certainly outweighed by the sense of humour which is so frequently surfaces; by moments that reveal a comic view of life which should develop when unconstrained by a desire to say the right thing. If *Scorched Earth* reminds one of anything of the newly-fashionable "London" trilogy of Colin MacInnes this is because it, too, gives the feeling that the author is only down there to visit.

Izzy, the heroine of Sue Limb's entertaining first novel, is too preoccupied with her married man, Michael, and a class of rowdy pupils to be much bothered by the real problems of the capital's problems. As the year begins in Earl's Court flat she wonders about her pupils: "Where to begin? The body, perhaps. Izzy had been feeling so fat recently that she like having somebody else in bed with her, would have to shape up. But, alas, so far the idea of exercise was reaching for the clouds. The months go by, the bed becomes variously peopled, and this involves a swift exit and abandoned underwear of her. Attempts are made to lose the fat. In the company of her friend Maria, Izzy goes to a gym, exercises classes given by a Maester. It would be "an elegant oriental trick to sneak off to the snortet, leaving a roomful of silly, giggling trendies going Haigh-Chual Haigh-Chual, their eyes shut in a freezing church hall."

The Garden Path contains much sprightly fun on these familiar foibles. Although the arch moments, a tandem ride towards the sentimental and a number of jokes that go on too long, it combines pedagogical and topical problems in a pleasing way.

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Homely facts and human bondage

Peter Kemp

ALASDAIR GRAY
1982, Janine
346pp. Cape. £8.95.
0224 020943

1982, Janine – the story of a long night's journey into day – portrays depressive torpor with exhilarating vigour. What happens is narrated by Jock, an alcoholic and insomniac security engineer nearing fifty, who has shut himself into a hotel room and is trying to keep reality at bay by immersion in whisky and pornographic fantasy. As these would-be defence mechanisms lose their power, though, self-awareness breaks through – ultimately driving him, after a botched suicide bid, out to a clearer-headed future. The book's closing words, "All right", aren't merely Jock's answer to a call announcing breakfast; they also mark the turning-point in a life that, for years, has been all wrong.

At first, facts about the narrator and his whereabouts are hazy. Swimmy with self-induced befuddlement, Jock can't remember where he is and wants to forget what he has been. Drink and erotic excitement blur a mind hiding from its own anxieties. To screen out remembrance of his actual relationships with women, a virtually non-stop series of blue movies is kept rolling inside Jock's skull. Far these sexy scenarios – finally more revealing of Jock than of their lascivious participants – Alasdair Gray exuberantly tumbles together the raunchy clichés and clichés of pornography. There are the usual high-heat couplings and trappings. Playing with a line-up of manipulable lavelles – such as Superb ("short for superbitch") or Janine (who "can look like any female stereotype from the dumb adolescent to the cool aristocrat") – Jock pushes them through inventive permutations. Exotic garments are struggled into and burst out of – "conspicuously apocryphal" outfits, "black fish-net stockings whose mesh is wide enough to insert three fingers", halter bras, suspender-belts, mercilessly spiky heels. Jock's imagination repeatedly plunges into moist secret valleys, defts and cleavages. But the most favoured motif – he has long been an aficionado of magazines like *Hogbe* and *Knally* – is damnation.

Bondage – Jack's erotic hang-up – dominates

ates the novel in more ways than one. His lurid thong-and-harness fantasies emerge as the wishful thinking of someone who himself feels drably imprisoned. They are also an attempt to batten down guilt and fears that might otherwise overwhelm him. Ironically, in that he's a specialist in security devices, Jock is hemmed in by a sense of insecurity. Partly, he's paralytically disturbed by the society he lives in. Scotland, as his work in installing surveillance circuits at defence establishments has shown him, is ominously "wired for war": nuclear bombers cluster on the Isle of Skye; missile submarines glide along the Firth of Clyde; the countryside around Loch Lomond is honeycombed with galleries of multi-negativ war-



A design by Alasdair Gray, from the book reviewed here.

heads. Along with this technological savagery goes economic callousness: contemporary Britain, pages of robust content argue, is a nation in which gaps between privileged and under-privileged are cruelly widened as the country becomes more and more regressive. What Jock finds most unendurable, however, is not the public barbarity which he passively accepts, but the private cruelty he has actively inflicted.

A writer whose work is graphic in the fullest sense, Alasdair Gray doesn't only invest his fiction with extreme immediacy, he also makes telling use of design and varying typography. As Jack becomes increasingly disoriented, different typefaces set at differing angles im-

itate the kaleidoscope of his thoughts – and disorientate the reader by forcing him to swivel and tilt the book. Shandean blank pages indicate when Jock's mind goes blank during his suicide attempt. Stars and block capitals signal the point where pornographic story-lines are cut short by being brought up against the sharp edge of reality. For, although Jock's imagination tries to fabricate a synthetic shelter for his panic-stricken mind, he keeps sabotaging his "exotic sexdreams with old memories of the homely facts".

At first merely glimpsed through rents in Jock's fantasies, these facts gradually move into the foreground of the narrative, just as – therapeutically – they move into the forefront of his consciousness. Portrayed with the sturdy immediacy that – for all his flair for fantasy and the extravagant – is such a winning element in Gray's fiction, Jock's memories are of a life history that's "very ordinary and very terrible". Petty snubbiness and selfishness have wreaked major damage in his life – causing him to exploit and abandon the one woman who gave him both emotional and sexual satisfaction; making his involvement with others, including his wife, a mixture of callousness and cowardice.

Finally acknowledging the inadequacy that lies behind the stories of superintendency he's concocted, Jock then lights on a hopeful aspect of his fantasizing. "The parts of the story which came to excite me most", he notes, "were not the physical humiliations but the moment when the trap starts closing and the victim feels the torture of being in two minds. . . . I was right to be excited by that moment because it is the moment when, with courage, we change things." Prompted by this realization, he determinedly alters course – something which takes the practical form of resigning from his job, and is metaphorically enacted in his concluding fantasy. On the verge of being pushed into another fetishistic sequence, Janine – formerly the tethered emblem of Jock's trapped state – simply and naturally removes all her clothes, with the thought "Show them more than they ever expected to see." Jock, whose striptease fantasies have given way to psychological self-exposure, is now like her, healthily unimpeded, "ready for anything". Lust for life, at the culmination of this genial, perceptive book, throws aside the trappings of artificial titillation. With an elegant, buoyant flourish, fantasy and reality promisingly coalesce.

Blossoming in Air Force blue

Joanna Motion

MARY WESLEY
The Camomile Lawn
297pp. Macmillan. £8.95.
0333 368924

"War makes people fearfully randy", says a character in *The Camomile Lawn*, looking round the Ritz Bar packed with adulterous couples. A few years earlier, during the "last ever summer holiday" in August 1939, a group of five young cousins and their assorted elders have dinner in the garden overlooking the Cornish coast. Above them is an ilex tree; under them is the aromatic camomile lawn. The girls wear kestosbras and their aunt irones the *Times* after it has been wrecked by her frascible, one-legged husband, veteran of the only war to have mattered thus far.

All their lives are already linked in a cat's-cradle of family relationships. The effect of Chamberlain's announcement ("that jackass") is to make the strings vibrate with activity and tension. Under the constraints of rationing, the blackout, jobs for women at the War Office and telephone calls compulsorily terminated after three minutes, dull lives are transformed, and the orthodox blossom joyfully into unconventional behaviour – mostly sex and drink. It's not just the young who relish the freedom that comes with Air Force blue and embarkation leave; the older generation too discovers the virtues of the orgasm (for women) and garlic in cooking (for men). The war provides a legitimate adult version of children's play: the childhood "terror, run" and "the killing" enacted on the Cornish cliffs are replaced by the real thing; and the fight and grief of the real thing have to be compensated for by other games.

In this, her second novel, Mary Wesley ferries her characters between Cornwall and London, between wartime and a present-day funeral which provides the opportunity both for reminiscence and the tying up of ends. The places, the people and times are all compellingly realized. Mary Wesley has a vigilant eye, which records with accuracy but with sympathy; there are no villains in the novel, only few victims. *The Camomile Lawn* is entertaining, eventful and often nicely witty.

But for all that, the book remains vaguely disappointing. Having created the potent mys-

tery of a large family's life, Mary Wesley is seduced by all these zesty cousins into a sentimentality that sometimes brings her dangerously close to inviting the subtitle "Five go into war and sex". There's a fair amount said about eyes like jet, and a very great deal about eyelashes. Lines such as "how salt your tears are" don't help.

The novel is so neatly plotted that the pattern shows through a little too clearly. Mary Wesley has such pleasure in making connections and piling up minor figures that a charac-

ter who turned out not to have slept with everyone else would come as sweet relief. The zig-zagging time structure accentuates her tendency towards authorial knowingness, pointing up, for instance, the sickening habit that Sophy has of making, aged ten, pronouncements which turn out to be perfectly true when she is fifty. And it encourages rather glib juxtapositions of the "I never saw him again" sort. *The Camomile Lawn* is the product of a mind which is lively, perceptive and engagingly racy – but over-tidy for its own good.

Misfitting in

Monty Haltrecht

NORMA LEVINSON
The Room Upstairs
255pp. Century Publishing. £8.95.
07126 03034
ROSEMARY FRIEDMAN
Rose of Jericho
253pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0575 034343

The Room Upstairs, like many first novels, leans very obviously on autobiography. Leah, like the author, is a teacher who chooses to teach, not the wholesome and orderly, but the handicapped or disturbed – sometimes dangerously disturbed; hardly past the first pages, she is almost killed by a psychotic, and from there it's back to the cheerlessness of her particularly nasty flat and, not surprisingly, near-breakdown. On several counts, this is a book that is hard to make sound appealing.

And yet, appealing it is. There is no self-pity; unsparing humour transforms the material. The twelve-year-old pregnant by her brutal father, or the grotesquely fat girl fed bacon and sandwiches by her mad mother in a house painted ghastly mauve to the very front door, are not mere case-histories; they become alive in Leah's perceptions. Her self-esteem shattered by a broken love-affair, she is most at home with the alienated; when she buys a house and takes lodgers, these too seem to conform to the pattern, as though she had deliberately set out to create a household of misfits.

But Leah is no stereotypical victim. She is

characterful, arrogant and aggressive, and it is believable that she should be surprised into loving once more. Giving the novel its forward movement is an authentic offbeat romance. There is a sly reference to Jane Eyre and Rochester; the Rochester figure is stiff and awkward, frozen by his concentration comp experience, but surviving with an acute sensitivity to others' wretchedness. He proves to be a healer – almost an archetype, but revealed with great naturalness. Leah eventually finds fulfillment; she doesn't complete the novel she has been struggling with, but her job takes her outside herself, into a relationship with a deaf and blind girl pupil.

The Room Upstairs might be counted a "Jewish" novel for its humour, and perhaps also for its disturbing sense of people's power over and dependency on each other. Its milieu is not Jewish, nor are most of the characters apart from the central ones; but in peopling her life with pupils and lodgers Leah may be unconsciously trying to recreate a kind of ghetto.

Rose of Jericho is a sequel to *Proofs of Affection*, in which the Jewish orthodox father died; his widow Kitty recognizes, as he would not have done, that times change, and she is easily reconciled to her son's "marrying out". The novel is observant and well-composed, with Kitty's holiday in Israel interlarded with scenes of back home; she returns to become embroiled in preparations for her younger daughter's wedding. There are some neat touches, but observations and reflections are practical and sensible rather than sharply perceptive; and overall the atmosphere is a little bland.

Musing on the buses

Edwin Morgan

JAMES KELMAN
The Busconductor Hines
217pp. Edinburgh: Polygon Books. £7.95.
0904919773

James Kelman, who brought out an excellent volume of short stories, *Nor Nor While The Gira*, in 1983, has now followed this with his first novel, and a remarkable book it is. The bus conductor hero lives with his wife Sandra and small son Paul in a century-old, crumbling tenement in Glasgow. It is Rab Hines' third attempt at holding down a bus conductor's job, and he is already in the authorities' black book for turning up late, putting his feet on seats, not wearing his hat, and other misdemeanours; added to which, bus conductors are on their way out in any case. His wife works part-time in an office, while Paul is in a day nursery. The tenement will soon be due for demolition: will (they be offered a house in Drumchapel (bad, but good in parts) or should they emigrate to Australia? The marriage, though a living and surviving one ("the unt, the irl"), is going through a huge stress-field of uncertainties. There is an unresolved climax, when Hines refuses to attend a disciplinary tribunal under the conditions laid down, and a union meeting takes up his case and proposes a strike; the outcome is left beyond the scope of the book's last pages.

The circumstances are ordinary, and the central character's alienation is also ordinary, in the sense that it can be related to obvious causes in society – over-authoritarian employers, "a no-bedroomed flat", fear of his wife leaving him – but the novel has ambitions

beyond the naturalistic. The naturalism is itself thoroughly convincing, whether in the tender and often humorous love scenes between husband and wife, or in the banter and backchat between the pagan Hines and his "Fenian" driver Reilly, or in some sharply perceived moments, as when Hines visits an old friend far too early in the morning (sensitivity to other people's reactions is not his strong point).

But the book is deepened by the fact that Hines, while not ceasing to be "the Busconductor Hines" who has ever had ambitions hypostatized as becoming "the Busdriver Hines", is also "predisposed towards speculative musing". These emerge in long monologues, some obsessively practical (the occasional househusband on how to cook mince and potatoes), some warmly associational in a Leopold Bloom manner (thoughts on back-court middens and encroaching tenement demolition lead to a meditation on animals, the mts and mics "trying to stay one jump ahead of the demolition men", the dead rodents feeding smaller creatures, evolution going on), some

ALAN HUNTER
The Unhung Man
173pp. Constable. £6.50.
009463270 E

Chief Superintendent Gently leaves his usual East Anglian haunts and travels down to Wiltshire to sort out a case that has puzzled the local force. A retired judge has been found dead with shotgun wounds in a rustic summer-house on his estate. A clear case of suicide, had it not been for the discovery of an alien fingerprint, apparently from the brand of a man condemned to death by the judge and hanged

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In perpetual crisis

Anne Smith

JAMES CAMPBELL.
Invisible Country: A journey through Scotland
163pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0297 783718.

James Campbell's Scotland comes as a surprise. For once a writer is describing the Scotland I know. There are of course, points of opinion with which one would take issue — "Scotland fears the sabbath" (and with a lower-case "s", too); I would have said, rather, that Scots respect the Sabbath; "the best representative of the Scottish identity... is... Peter Pan", since so many Scots writers focus on childhood: this is glib and unperceptive; "Aberdeen is a quiet girl at a party who has been asked to sing": this betrays a more than Gothic ignorance of the Aberdonian character. Such debatable points rarely arise, however, and they are easily outweighed by Campbell's penetrating analyses of more serious matters, in particular his courageous dismissal of Scottish political life.

He writes of the aftermath of the failure of the 1979 referendum on devolution, "the same old political struggles emerged in the form of the same endless debates, and the correspondence columns of the *Scotsman* once again became a problem page for sufferers from the Scottish identity crisis": in crisis, he might have added, that was clearly undiminished by Cockburn in his *Journals*; one of the longest-lasting crises in recorded history, perhaps. Campbell has the courage, too, to attempt to demolish the Scott legend, carefully and at some length, weaving his commentary skillfully through his travelogue on the Borders. He concludes this section by underscoring Edwin Muir's comment that Scott "took from both worlds — those of Jacobite history and of the nineteenth-century solidarity — the cheapest they could give him, romantic illusion and worldly advantage". To many Scots, who have not succumbed to the all-pervasive kailyard sentimentality that he did so much to encourage, Scott is seen as an early precursor of Walt Disney.

Almost as much courage is shown in Campbell's remark that the Edinburgh

Festival brings the city "out of the Scottish sleeping sickness for three weeks of the year". And similarly, his Inverness, with its bad food and worse service, is only too recognizable, as is his description of the precipitous, foggy, spine-chilling road to Applecross. He spares hardly anyone, not even the owners of the hands that feed him. Lord and Lady Glengole's teenage son is described as "thin and fresh-faced with a permanent smirk" — though the chapter in which this description occurs might be said to have been itself written with a prolonged smirk: it is the only unconsciously ambiguous chapter in the book. Campbell seems to have some difficulty in coping with the attractive manners of the landed gentry. Earlier he writes about a conversation with "the laird of A —", the only person not named in the book, and lets the laird's apologia for his ancestor's brutal treatment of the crofters during the Highland Clearances pass without question or comment.

Campbell comes closest to genuine perception of the Scottish psyche when he writes about Iain Crichton Smith, and his own response to Smith's work. Through reading Smith, he realized that Gaelic was "a missing part of my world". He tried then to learn the language but that did not give him what he sought. He concludes nevertheless that the history of the modern Gael "remains mine: written into my conscience in invisible ink, in a language I have forgotten how to understand". In this, Campbell probably represents the feeling of a great many native-born Scots, and it is well said, if a little romantic. But for that passage, one could have protested that the Scott himself is not nearly enough in evidence in Campbell's account of Scotland. His conversations, moreover, are almost exclusively with men. He might have probed a lot deeper, stayed a bit longer in the places he describes. It was a hasty journey, and for that reason, does not seem to have afforded the traveller any new revelations, whether of himself or of his country.

Nevertheless, *Invisible Country* is an interesting and entertaining piece of travel writing, not so much comparable to Edwin Muir's *Scottish Journey*, (for that is a classic account by a unique sensibility) as it is to Defoe's more pragmatic *Tour*.

Escaping to independence

Nicholas Phillipson

CHARLES CAMIC.
Experience and Enlightenment: Socialization for cultural change in eighteenth century Scotland
301pp. Edinburgh University Press. £20.
0852244835.

Charles Camic, who is a Chicago-trained sociologist, sees the Scottish Enlightenment as a moment in Scottish cultural history when five men, Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Robertson and Millar, broke free of "the medieval Calvinist attitudes of dependency and particularism" in the name of an understanding of human behaviour which was rooted in ideas of "independence and universalism". At every stage in their early histories, Camic claims, in the family, at school, at university and in their attempts to gain a foothold in the patronage-orientated world of contemporary Scotland, they had to negotiate a social system which was designed to maximize their sense of dependency, and to bind them to the values of the Westminster Confession of Faith. However, at every point in the process of socialization, Camic argues, the "enlighteners" found that there were unexpected escape-routes which led to the world of independence: partly loss of their fathers, the distinctive mechanisms of education in small burgh schools and the remarkable elective system of education provided by the newly reformed Scottish universities.

Camic's analysis has real strengths which flow from his intelligence, his lucidity and, above all, from his faith in the power of sociology to move historical mountains; his discussion is constantly alert and thought-provoking. Indeed, the last chapters on family organization and burgh school education are the best available introductions to important and unexplored territories. But *Experience and*

Enlightenment contains serious weaknesses. In the first place, Camic's list of "enlighteners" seems arbitrarily chosen. However charitably one applies his rules, it is hard to see why it doesn't include scientists like Cullen, Black and Hutton and, more importantly, Hutcheson and Scott. Then there is the problem of data: what is known or is ever likely to be known about the early history of his five heroes is exiguous. Camic's answer to this is that an adequate account of the institutional history of socialization will breathe life into these fragmentary remains. There is something in this. But an analysis which is based simply on facts and opinions culled from the more obvious secondary sources is scarcely likely to appeal to the empirically-minded.

Even as it stands, however, Camic's argument doesn't convince. He argues that socialization provided the experiential foundations which allowed his five "enlighteners" to establish a culture qualitatively different from that of their dependency-orientated contemporaries. But this socialization could equally well be applied to a significant proportion of the inhabitants of the polite world of moderate clergy and improvement-orientated laity in which the "enlighteners" lived. He dismisses them out of hand on the grounds — assumed rather than proved — that they lived in a state of false consciousness, never really managing to escape from the bonds of Calvinism. That simply will not do. If Camic is ever to move beyond speculation he will have to devote much more time to the language of dependency and independence employed by his heroes and by the polite literati. Only then will he be in a position to reach conclusions about the close and complex relationship that existed between them as well as producing an analysis that is less of a conversation piece and more of a contribution to the search for the origins of the Scottish Enlightenment.

The next wave

Anne Stevenson

ALEXANDER SCOTT and JAMES AITCHISON
(Editors)
New Writing Scotland 1983
152pp. Aberdeen University Press. £2.95.
0950262943

Anthologies are an awkward species of literature. However carefully planned, they are inconsistent as to the voice, formless as to development; yet they are not quite ephemeral enough to be read like periodicals. At their best they are showcases for deserving but unrecognized new writers, and in this respect *New Writing Scotland 1983* fulfils its aim. At least eight out of the twenty-five Scottish writers represented here were born after 1950; there are also new voices from older generations which are reassuring to hear. On the other hand, anyone acquainted with recent Scottish writing will miss some old favourites: work by Edwin Morgan, Norman MacCaig, Iain Crichton Smith, Alastair Reid, Tom Leonard, James Kelman, Liz Lochhead, Alasdair Gray, and many others is absent. So we must take "new Scottish writing" to mean mainly "new Scottish writers". And although a strong Glasgow sonnet by Mounce Lindsay and a witty Lallans "Hand" explored by Alastair Mackie prove that the new-writer policy has not been absolute, this anthology shows that many new Scottish writers have emerged on the scene.

The most conspicuous new talent is that of Colin Mackay, whose verse play, *Naphthali*, set in the Pentland Hills in the late seventeenth century, succeeds in being both a Mystery Play in the medieval manner and a timeless lamentation over the evils of war. Amazingly, Mackay's style is not Brechtian, although echoes of *Mother Courage* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* are certainly discernible. Yet Brecht's cynical edge, his wry sophistication, have no place in the essential innocence of *Naphthali*'s presentation. If anything, Mackay seems to have been influenced by Yeats, or even Scott. His verse is full of ballad-like pathos (he does not hesitate to borrow and adapt what he wants from folklore) yet it never falls to sound dramatic.

Twice the red hot storm at the grey,
and twice was beaten back,
and a scattering of still red bodies lay
on the trampled grass.

Joys of the shack

James Hunter

FINLAY J. MACDONALD
Crotal and White: Scenes from a Hebridean boyhood
172pp. MacDonald. £7.95.
0356097323

Travellers' tales from the Hebrides are common enough and they sell well to summer tourists. Too many of them, though, are characterized by the uncomprehending condescension that has long been the English-speaking Britain's standard reaction to cultures that owe nothing to his own. "We looked poor to some of the travel writers who were beginning to seek us out with probing cameras and pens oozing purple prose," writes Finlay MacDonald of Harris in the 1920s and 1930s: some of them made capital out of what they called our poverty because they didn't understand that poverty of amenities and lack of cash only represent poverty relative to the beholder's norms. Of course we looked poor to somebody from Mayfair in London or Morningside in Edinburgh. And we looked poor to socially conscious left wing observers like Louis MacNeice who wrote in *I crossed the Minch* about "a row of poor shacks on the road to Leverburgh".

One of these "shacks" was the MacDonald home. It was made of corrugated iron. It stood on one of eight crofts, or smallholdings, created in that south-western corner of Harris by a government which, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, was under some very violent pressure from Hebridean ex-servicemen determined to ensure that the authorities made good their rashly given wartime promises to resettle at least some of the better

The third time it broke the line
and the grey men turned and ran.
The troopers sabred them on the moor
and despatched each wounded man,
and marched their prisoners to Embro town
with drummers playing in the van.
The sound of musket shots died away,
and the battle-cries were gone;
a hundred still red corpses lay
— each one of woman born.

Mackay has an instinctive feeling for cadence and rhyme which most poets lack these days. He is also a writer who understands and represents the fierce passions of hate, cruelty and need. In his company the other writers in this anthology seem to belong to a lesser, weaker tradition. The journalistic satire of Carl MacDougall's "The Thomson Family Reads 'The Sun'" is only palely funny; Brian McCabe's somewhat *déjà vu* sketch of a useless psychiatric session ("The Sky") seems shallow. Two stories, however, are outstandingly perceptive: David Strachan's "Areas of Irresponsibility" shows that a man can write as well as any woman of women's emotions; and Jackson Webb's "Lowlands Calendar" is a fine story about marriage and poverty in a situation now accepted as "an alternative life-style". Gillian Somerville's "In The House of My Aunts" is also full of accurate perceptions, although it may be a little on the *Woman's Own* side of the fictional fence. Valerie Thomson, too, tends to romance in her story "India Song Blues," though she redeems herself with a marvellous witty poem about a rag-and-bone man chopping up a bath.

Apart from the poems of *Naphthali*, the poems in *New Scottish Writing* are, in general, slighter than the fiction. Robin Hamilton writes with a Burns-like eye of "Lesbia's Mouse", but without Burns's acute sense of rhythm. Ruairidh MacThomais, otherwise known as Derrick Thomson, is represented by two light poems, translated from the Gaelic into pleasant English. I can't see why, however, Iain Mac Dhonnall's short story, "Air Chail", written entirely in Gaelic, is included in this otherwise entirely Scottish-English book. It shouldn't be necessary to apologize to Scotland's other language. Are we given this Gaelic story to make us feel embarrassed or guilty or merely curious? *New Scottish Writers 1983* is an interesting, readable, in many ways exciting anthology of recent work, but the editors would serve Gaelic culture better with a book of its own.

land from which their forebears had been evicted during the previous century's Highland Clearances.

That part of Harris is comparatively fertile. It is also beautiful, consisting of a broad swathe of *machair*, or natural grassland, lying between rocky hills and pure white shell-sand beaches fringing the Atlantic. It was a good place to grow up, even in the depression years when their newly-obtained land proved incapable of yielding much more than a bare subsistence to the MacDonalds and their neighbours.

Financial salvation of a sort was eventually provided by the loom on which Finlay MacDonald's father began to weave Harris Tweed, the "crotal" of the title being the lichen which yields one of the vegetable dyes which give that cloth its distinctive hue. But this book is no labour of avocation of hard times. It is a light-hearted celebration of the better side of a way of life which was not to endure much longer — not least because its abler products, of whom Mr MacDonald is one, were invariably siphoned into the wider society by an educational system which was the most certain means to the material advancement their parents were increasingly convinced could not be obtained at home.

On the young Finlay MacDonald there weighed heavily the responsibility of passing the examination that was the key to the bursary needed to take him to secondary school. But there were also rabbits to be trapped and peas to be cut. There was a Christmas "treat" to be cooked by a boy whose tweed suit was too big and too faded and whose hair had been cut too short by his father. There were encounters with the supernatural and with a sexually unliberal tinkler-lass. All of it reads extremely well.

The amorous repertoire

Alan Paterson

JULIAN OLIVARES
The Love Poetry of Francisco de Quevedo
180pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.50.
0521243629

Francisco de Quevedo was, wrote Borges, "not so much a man as a vast and complex literature". His appetite for books was immense; even when he sat down to eat, they would be propped up before him on stands so that not a moment should be squandered. A late inheritor of European Humanism, his erudition accompanied a deep concern to serve the spiritual and ideological needs of his fellow Spaniards. Through his thick-rimmed glasses, he also observed their antics and idiosyncrasies, subjecting them to unforgettable ridicule in his satire — in their sexual customs he found a rich vein of the absurd. Excepting Góngora, no other seventeenth-century Spanish poet displays such prurient attention and quick wit as Quevedo, nor applies it to such a wide range of sexual and amorous experience. He was conversant with the dangerous underworld of homosexuals and their slang; he knew the ruddy, fox-ridden *denúncio* serviced by professional and amateur prostitutes. In a viciously witty ballad, written for solace while he was imprisoned in a monastery cell, Quevedo stalks among the bathing-parties gathered by Manzanares stream; gleefully he notes the flaunted flesh, sees the nobility's coaches drawn up for discreet debauchery, observes how the carts of whores are galloping wildly out of control, and maliciously spies on the virgin splashing and preening her maidenhead.

But Quevedo's gaze also turned, more seriously, upon himself, and in his love poetry he became his own tormentor and victim, conducting a remorseless inquisition into a mind and body racked by the expectations and limitations of desire. It is not an easy poetry; it is composed with unremitting intensity. Unlike the lush paganism of his arch-rival Góngora, the pleasure of Quevedo's poetry lies in its iron discipline, in the firm structures of the sonnet, where words are in unchallenged command. It takes courage to confront this kind of poetry, and Julián Olivares emerges with great credit; certainly this is a major contribution to studies of seventeenth-century Spanish poetry, made accessible to non-Hispanists by able translations from Bernard Bentley and Elias Rivers of each poem discussed.

Olivares sees three great motifs sustained throughout the love poems: Petrarchan courtly love, Neoplatonism and the poet's own intense awareness of death. How these motifs are fashioned into Quevedo's vision of love is the subject of close and erudite analysis.

Quevedo was a master of the lexicon and ethos of courtly love, but Olivares properly demolishes any idea that he subscribed to the postulates of unrequited devotion or the pleasures of frustration. Quevedo was no conventional courtly lover: where Petrarch demonstrates the lover's solitude, Quevedo reaches into his soullessness and anguish. He can stand aside, as well, and, in a voice more complex than Petrarch's, impart a ludic sense to the behaviour of the courtly lover, an oblique, critical view that burlesques as it celebrates a tradition of language and sentiment. Olivares approaches Quevedo through his erudition, and his familiarity with the treatises that stabilized and promulgated the aesthetic and emotional creeds of love in the sixteenth century. Yet, on close reading, the erotic is present too, and occupies a more central position than the erudite approach suggests.

Sonnet 359, in imitation of Petrarch, is a case in point. It deals with the lover's loneliness and self-recrimination; his bed has become a battlefield. Why this should be so is subtly developed by Olivares in terms of the casuistry of courtly love. Basically, the anguish arises because the lady is not in bed with the lover. But what difference if she were? The explanation of the anguish is that sleep, the image of death, "is for me of greater asperity than death". "pues me esgorra el sumo bien de verte" — "since it denies me the supreme good of seeing you" reads the translation; but it could, with equal validity, read "since the supreme good of seeing you disturbs me". On the

first reading, the anguish comes because sleeping denies the heart its sustenance, the beatific vision of the beloved. On the second reading, the anguish comes from not being able to get in sleep properly: to be there in bed with the beloved and to be the courtly lover is to suffer the hell not of absence, but of presence. So as not to let pass the supreme good of seeing her, the lover stays awake. The tercet obligingly corroborates this possibility: "for such is your charm and your beauty, that, since Nature was able to create you, Nature can perform miracles". The miracle is, of course, that of being resurrected from the dead; instead of spending his nights dead asleep (as is natural), the lover is kept awake (in defiance of Nature). Here, an unusual psychological dimension opens up; the fate of the courtly lover when the love he desires is granted is the bitter solitude of the perpetual insomniac; to be with her in bed, is still to be alone.

In much of Quevedo's love poetry there is a clear recognition that lovers follow the habits and sentiments handed on by previous lovers. The male thinks and behaves as others from the past have taught him; he feels in response to how the female reacts; he may not as he thinks the female requires of him. So his love towards her becomes a conspicuous act of self-dramatization, addressed to an anonymous assembly of others who know the game, or displayed before her as a reflection of her wishes. This ludic sense in Quevedo's poetry does not lift his sentiment above the commonplace; it makes us see the commonplace for what it really is — the centuries-old repertoire that has Quevedo going through its paces, and wryly observing himself as both marksman and target.

Olivares reaches the conclusion that Quevedo is anti-platonic: the celestial fire does not extinguish his physical flame. But what Olivares construes on occasions as irony could well be seen as Quevedo's satire on sentimental fashion. "Flora commands me, alas Fabio, to love her and not to want her", starts one of his most complete accounts of the Neoplatonic idea. The circumstantial title, with its fine distinction between two verbs (*querer* and *amar*), hangs over the laboured ascent from social circumstance to sophistry until, by the swift, aphoristic execution of the last tercet, we feel that a sweet and subtle revenge has been taken on Flora by giving her more than she had bargained for.

Quevedo's redirection of an inherited courtly lexicon towards a non-fanciful reality, where the passion that desires immortality faces the individual's extinction, forms the last and persuasive theme in Olivares's study. Here his deference to English criticism on the metaphysical poets is explicit and suggestive in its application. Yet there must be a reservation. The Spanish poet's coat cannot always be cut from English cloth, despite the recent tendency to call certain of Quevedo's poems "Poemas metafísicos" as if he had so entitled them. English criticism tends to hedge the operations of wit, seeing the conceit as an act that unifies experience and brings about the resolution of opposites, thereby answering a metaphysical yearning for completeness. Spanish wit, expressed in the conceit, is less specialized and more flexible. It is often far from being metaphysical. Nor need it unify experience; it may do the opposite. In the case of Quevedo — and Professor Olivares does justice to this case — the poet tackles the apparent solidity and truthfulness-to-experience acquired through the habit of centuries by the language and sentiment of love poetry, and breaks them down in front of us, showing them up for the illusions they always were, toys to divert the Flauberts, Lisas and Quevedos from the reality of their solitude and mortality.

A recent addition to Manchester University Press's series of editions of Spanish texts in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, by Federico García Lorca, edited by H. Ramsdon (169pp. £3.95. 01719009502). Completed on June 19, 1936, only two months before Lorca's execution in Granada at the age of thirty-eight. *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is a study of five unmarried daughters "tyrannised by their mother's excessive concern with social class and obscurantist village morality", and is widely held to be Lorca's greatest play.

Drama on the move

Ann L. Mackenzie

HENRY W. SULLIVAN
Calderón in the German Lands and the Low Countries: His reception and influence, 1654-1980
510pp. Cambridge University Press. £29.50.
0521249023

Many of the Calderón translations and adaptations uncovered by Henry Sullivan in the libraries and archives of France, Holland, Belgium, Austria and above all Germany survive only in rare editions or in manuscript copies. One might mention in particular Wouter's version of Calderón's *La devoción de la cruz*, a presumed lost until Professor Sullivan discovered a single extant copy entitled *Devoción van Eusebio* (1665), in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. That work, in which Calderón's Jesuit reasoning is ingeniously converted into Jansenist polemic, is not the only "lost" version of *La devoción de la cruz* found by Sullivan. He has also unearthed a hitherto unknown nineteenth-century manuscript of *Eusebio, der Sohn des Walder*, a revision by an anonymous playwright of Schlegel's translation of the drama. Still more important, however, is Sullivan's discovery of a manuscript copy which is an adaptation by Goethe, for performance in Weimar, of Schlegel's translation of *El príncipe consorte*.

Sullivan's researches into secondary sources, it should be stressed, have been no less diligent and rewarding. He demonstrates profound knowledge of the numerous comments made about Calderón in letters, essays, lectures and reviews by such major German dramatists as Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Grillparzer, Hebbel and Hofmannsthal. He discusses and correlates "the surprisingly extensive remarks of the German idealist philosophers", notably Schlegel, Schelling, Schulze, Schopenhauer and Hegel, concerning the nature of Calderonian tragedy. He assesses the contributions to Calderonian criticism made by early

twentieth-century scholars like Spitzer, Vossler, Pfandl and Hatzfeld, and reveals "important insights in these essays [which] have lain neglected till the present day". Not least, he offers in his final pages a judicious appraisal of recent German research on Calderón, particularly that accomplished by The Hamburg Calderón School, 1964-1980, under the indefatigable leadership of Professor Hans Flasche, who, as Sullivan rightly maintains, had the foresight "to realize that filling the lacunae of Calderón scholarship can be achieved only by teams of scholars at the national and international level who coordinate their efforts".

All thirteen chapters of *Calderón in the German Lands and the Low Countries* are outstandingly informative and chapters Two and Three are particularly noteworthy for their full supply of answers to the demanding question: how did Calderón's plays get to Germany? In the seventeenth century evidently most of them came there by way of the Netherlands. Dutch and Flemish writers took over an enormous amount of dramatic material from Calderón at this period. On the whole, however, they burrowed indirectly through French versions of plays like *El galán furioso*, *La dama duende*, *El astrólogo fingido* and *El alcázar de sí mismo*, often without even realizing that their original source was Calderón. Travelling troupes of players carried such re-adaptations from the Netherlands into North Germany, where they were adapted yet again, into German. Some of Calderón's plays entered Germany along a more royal route, travelling by way of the Habsburg court at Vienna. There in the 1660s and early 1670s the Empress Maria Margaritha, daughter of Philip IV of Spain, soured her homesickness by doses of regularly performed Spanish comedias, which included Calderón's *Don Quijote* and *no dar nada*.

Professor Sullivan's book will be an essential source of knowledge and inspiration not only for Hispanists and Germanists but for all scholars concerned to determine the character and evaluate the worth of European drama.

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The last of the Dogras

Tapan Raychaudhuri

KARANSINGH
His Apparent: An Autobiography
(171pp, Oxford University Press, £9.95,
019 5614380)

In 1949, at the age of eighteen, Yuvraj Karan Singh, heir to the last Maharaja of Kashmir, became Regent when his father had to go into virtual exile following the State's accession to India. Three years later, with the young prince's election as head of the Kashmir State by a Constituent Assembly at the instance of Sheikh Abdullah, the century-old rule of the Dogra dynasty came to an end. In less than a year after this event, the Sheikh was dismissed and put under arrest by order of the twenty-two-year-old Sadar-i-Riyasat. Karan Singh's brief autobiography ends with this traumatic event in the Kashmir State's turbulent history.

The Kashmir story, often cited as the most flagrantly anti-democratic skeleton in India's political cupboard, has been told many times by Western as well as Indian journalists. Here, for the first time, it is recounted by a major participant. Karan Singh's account is not free from bias, but he does place his cards on the table. The Sheikh is identified without hesitation as sworn enemy of the Dogra Raj and his conflict with Maharaja Hari Singh presented as a personal feud. Karan Singh makes no attempt to explain away his father's antedilu-

vian politics and total incomprehension of the changing times, which destroyed him. The Sheikh's rise to power, however, is traced implicitly to the traditional hostility between predominantly Muslim Kashmiris and Hindu Dogras (the communal difference is not emphasized) with little reference to his leadership of a democratic, anti-authoritarian movement.

Except for this one departure from objectivity, post-accession developments in Kashmir and the circumstances of the accession itself are narrated with remarkable honesty. Many of the State's troubles are ascribed to the Maharaja's ostrich-like refusal to face facts and arrive at a decision. Sheikh Abdullah's gradual shift from a position of enthusiastic involvement with India towards ambitions of independence is traced quite convincingly, though the common people of the valley and their aspirations are not much in evidence. One point, however, remains obscure. The author claims full responsibility for the decision to dismiss Abdullah and attributes the Sheikh's arrest to his successor, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad's insistence. But did the twenty-two-year-old Sadar-i-Riyasat take such a momentous step without first seeking New Delhi's approval? The author merely refers in this context to the role played by Brigadier Kaul, "who was acting as a sort of unofficial counsellor between us and Delhi".

The politics of Kashmir is, however, only one component of this autobiography. In a mere

twenty-two years, the author achieved a remarkable transition from medieval to modern times, from feudal splendour to a somewhat bourgeois, albeit very affluent, mode of life. The shift began with his rather unimpressive years at the Doon School - where the food was inedible and his shared bedroom uncomfortably cold. The school was an unexpected choice for an Indian prince. The Mayo School, if not Eton or Harrow, would have been a more natural destination. But even before the heir-apparent had reached the age of eleven, subversive influences had entered the palace, in the shape of a private tutor who brought with him a marble tablet bearing the figure of Gandhi. He also implanted a hopeful thought in his pupil: "If all Indians were to unite together it would be enough to wash all the Britishers in India into the sea". No wonder the young prince, oblivious of traditional loyalties, was "secretly rooting for the Germans" when the war began. There were other, more serious, subversive influences at work as well - Nehru's autobiography, a sense of shock at the sight of Stirling's misery in the shadow of his own feudal grandeur, an early awareness of "authority without generosity, power without compassion" in the Maharaja's treatment of his hapless minions, and, at eighteen, the writings of Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley. All very unsuitable for an heir-apparent, but perhaps not bad training for a youthful role as aide to a Fabian visionary.

But, it is not easy to discard the past in India.

For a prince, evidently, it proved to be impossible. Karan Singh's mother was a poor village girl chosen to be the Maharaja's fourth wife and, it was hoped, to produce a male heir to the throne. When the happy event was near at hand, the girl was moved to a hotel in Cannes, in one of those improbable whims which were a daily occurrence in a Maharaja's barge. Such fantasy persisted. The infant prince was betrothed to a baby princess, but the engagement was later broken off, probably because Sardar Patel felt that it would be a good thing if Kashmir married Nepal, even though the former no longer denoted princely power. And thus at nineteen the Yuvraj took a child bride of thirteen, who was often a silent hostess at dinners for international diplomats and celebrities. The past had even more relentless ways of claiming its own, too. After studying Sanskrit, Hindu philosophy and the sage of Pondicherry, Karan Singh was, by his late teens, well versed in the ancient heritage, and it is his dominant concern today, after an unsatisfying career in politics.

His autobiography offers the portrait of a shy and sensitive youth, growing up in a fairy-tale world which has now gone for ever, and into an egalitarian era he embraced with some eagerness. He writes of this revolutionary change in his life with approval and an evident sense of happiness. This is a book worth reading, not least because the self-effacing protagonist holds our interest effortlessly.

Holy hollows

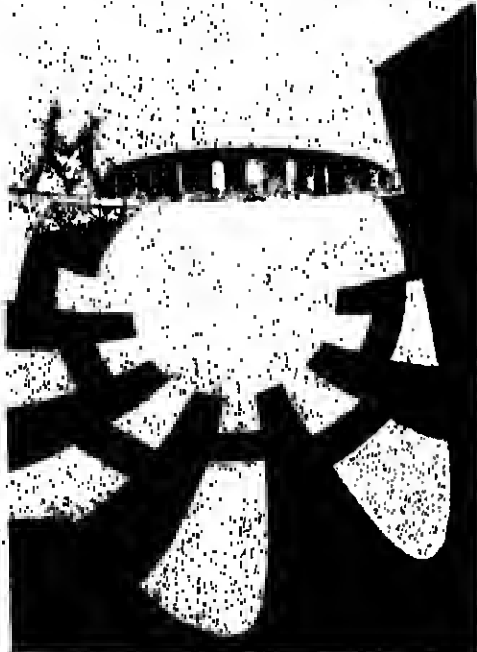
J. C. Harle

WENDY DONIGER O'FLAHERTY, GEORGE MICHELL and CARMEL BERKSON
Elephanta: The Cave of Shiva
49pp, with 75 black-and-white plates.
Guildford: Princeton University Press, £30.40
(paperback, £16.50).
0691 040095

In India cave-temples and monasteries cut into rock faces, usually but not invariably with elaborate façades, date back to the third century BC. The technique of excavating caves was first employed in India in Bihar for a minor sect contemporary with the earliest days of Buddhism. With the exception of the Jaina caves in Orissa, the excavated monuments of the first great phase of activity were Buddhist and concentrated in the general region of Bombay and its hinterland. The excavated caves consisted of *cave-halls*, for congregational worship and *viharas* with cells in which the monks dwelt. This phase came to an end in the second and third centuries AD. The second great phase of excavation commenced some two centuries later with Brahmanical caves; it reflected the decline of Buddhism in western India and the rise of theistic Hinduism. However, Buddhist caves continued to be excavated; notably the splendid creations at Ajanta and the elaborate ones at Ellora, although these are surpassed, at least as far as sculpture is concerned, by a number of Brahmanical caves. Figure sculpture, relatively rare in the early caves, proliferates, particularly the great mythological panels which are one of the distinctive glories of Indian art and nowhere so spectacularly achieved as at Elephanta (circa mid-sixth century AD).

This lavishly illustrated book on Elephanta is welcome for, apart from the intrinsic interest of the cave itself, the sculptures, although severely mutilated, are among the greatest glories of Indian art. The photographs by Carmel Berkson are good on the whole, though the principal photograph of the great Shiva-shiva image is badly over-exposed, as a comparison to Eliot Eliason's photograph in the Bollingen volumes of some thirty years ago will show. Carmel Berkson's contribution in the text provides valuable insights into the aesthetics and technique of the sculpture; most important, it invites the reader to look more closely at it.

George Michell provides a clear account of the temple's unusual ground-plan and its iconographical scheme. The latter's "royal" connotations, albeit only suggested, are attributed to the unusually large number of panels (three) showing Shiva with Parvati, the royal couple,



"The Patterns of Jantar Mantra", reproduced from Delhi: A Portrait by Kishan Singh with photographs by Raghu Rai (51pp with 30 colour and 60 black-and-white illustrations. Delhi: Oxford University Press, £19.50, 0 195614372). The Jantar Mantra observatory was built by the Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur in the eighteenth century and contains a sundial on a triangular elevation as well as other contemporary constructions which are still used to calculate eclipses of the sun and the moon and the movements of the stars.

which may in fact simply be due to the excessive demands placed on the iconographic repertoire by the exceptional size and complexity of the cave.

Wendy O'Flaherty, from her unrivalled knowledge of classical Hindu mythology, provides succinct information about the gods and goddesses and other creatures in the sculptural scenes and the roles they are called upon to play. One does not have to agree with some of her views, which are influenced by modern psychological research, to find them extremely stimulating. The descriptive or historian must, however, question her statement that door-keepers are often depicted as "a fierce lion or a mythical animal resembling a griffin". Door-keepers (human) are invariably placed beside doorways, the animals Professor O'Flaherty refers to are on the approach to the entrance and are more characteristic of Nepal and South-East Asia than India. There is a usefully annotated bibliography of considerable length, for Elephanta has astounded visitors for a very long time.

Oddities and quiddities

Fram Dinshaw

TREVOR FISHLOCK
India File: Inside the subcontinent
189pp, John Murray, £9.95.
07195 40720

India File, by Trevor Fishlock who was for three years *The Times* correspondent in India, is not a travel book, but a collection of essays on aspects of modern Indian life. Fishlock's strengths are a cool judgment combined with a ready sympathy. He takes it as axiomatic that it is pointless to judge India and its inhabitants by alien standards, and this enables him to explain, though not necessarily to condone, customs and conditions that might seem unnatural in the West. Though the book contains bursts of descriptive writing, it is much better at dealing with society and institutions than at conveying a sense of place or people. Indians speak in these pages to impart information or make a particular point, but they never really appear as themselves.

Inevitably *India File* is a loosely arranged collection of snapshots and Fishlock's attention is directed towards the more obviously odd or exotic Indian subjects: astrologers, deities, marriage and sex, gods and gurus, justice and corruption, films, tigers, the Ootacamund Club. He seems to be writing for readers who know very little about India, otherwise much of this - disquisitions on Delhi traffic, marriage-advertisements or the dated English of Hindi phrase-books - is bound to seem rather banal, and the immense amount of detailed and up-to-date information which he crams into his pages cannot adequately compensate for a certain lack of personality at the heart of the book.

On the other hand, his sanity and fairness go some way towards redeeming this obviousness. His sympathy for and understanding of Indian manners are evident, but he is also just and penetrating on the faults of the Indian temperament: inordinate touchiness, lone suspiciousness, sycophancy to those in power, and an absurd preoccupation with the colour of their own skins. He is surely right to pooh-pooh the (largely British) notion that dishonesty and incompetence are a product of Hinduism, but he sees clearly how the forces of caste, and dharma will always be stronger than the Western democracy which has been grafted on to them. They reinforce that priority given to family or group over the broader interests of society, which "is merely human, rather than Indian", but "does water the ground for corruption in the Indian context".

By far the best part of *India File* is concerned

with Mrs Gandhi and her administration. Fishlock's concise account of this complicated subject is the fairest and, in its lack of stridency, the most telling that I have read. He conveys both subtly and forcefully the quality of the woman and the brooding power over the land which emanates from the colonial bungalow at No 1 Safdarjung Road: "no single person in history has run India so completely... No Moghul emperor, no viceroys, had so much territory, population and responsibility to manage." The changing expressions of her face in the daily press are "a kind of diary entry for Indians, a record of their own changing fortunes". He makes Mrs Gandhi seem almost necessary. He is brutally frank about the shortcomings of the Janata party and good on her political resilience and popular appeal; at the same time he leaves the reader in no doubt that the vision of Gandhi and Nehru has been betrayed. The cost of stability has been high. Mrs Gandhi is "a tactician but no strategist". She is bedevilled by suspiciousness and prizes loyalty above integrity or competence. Her subordinates are afraid to take decisions. She has damaged the Congress beyond repair. The depressing subtext of Fishlock's account is that in India this may be a natural state of affairs. Perhaps Gandhiji, not Mrs Gandhi, was the aberration.

In other ways (this is a tantalizing book, Fishlock is an exceptionally good foreign correspondent and he has made it his business to understand what he writes about. It is clear that the quiddity of India did not escape him, yet it has not survived on the printed page. He has a sharp eye and can produce a vivid phrase - tonga-horses have "toast-rack ribs", Indian crowds are "as disputatious as starlings", a guru's limousine scatters alms "like shelled peas" - but there is something self-conscious and overreaching about his descriptive manner which becomes wearing as the book progresses. If, however, the surface of Indian life too often eludes his pen, there can be no doubt that he has thought deeply about what lies beneath it, and his rare judgments on India and Indians are worth attending to.

He thinks Indian humour "an undeveloped region" but it is difficult to tell whether he had more than a smattering of any Indian language. Is Indian callousness or strategy for survival to be entertained by a society in which a bank manager refuses a client a loan because his astrologer predicts that he has not long to live, and the astrologer reports that the man committed suicide a few months later? The most moving words in this book come from an Englishwoman still living in Ooty, who may, against the odds, have absorbed something of this spirit: "With the British gone the deer and the porcupine are coming back to the hills."

Back-stage in Athens

Richard Clogg

GEORGIOS RALLIS
Ores Efhyvnis
326pp, 500 drs.
Khoris prokatastasi gia to paron kal ta mellon
220pp, 400 drs.
Athens: Evroekdotiki.

Politicians in Greece have not in general been much given to writing memoirs. Among the few exceptions is Emmanouil Tsouderos, who wrote useful accounts of his tribulations as prime minister of the government-in-exile for much of the Second World War. More recently, in 1979, Spyros Markezinis published an essentially unconvincing, if comically and revealingly name-dropping, apologia for his brief and dismal premiership during the fag-end of the Papadopoulos dictatorship. The paucity of such documents makes George Rallis's *Ores Efhyvnis* (Hours of Responsibility) all the more valuable to the student of recent Greek politics. Couched in the form of a diary, the book covers Rallis's seventeen-month premiership before Andreas Papandreu swept to power in the October 1981 election.

Rallis became prime minister of the New Democracy government in May 1983, when Constantine Karanannis, having secured Greece's accession to the European Community, kicked himself upstairs to the presidency. Rallis, in the first leadership election ever held by a ruling party in Greece, narrowly emerged as the victor over his older and more conservative rival, Evangelos Averoff. The first of many revelations in *Ores Efhyvnis*, indeed, is that Karanannis himself clearly never considered that Rallis had any chance of beating Averoff. Moreover, Rallis provides plenty of evidence that Averoff never really reconciled himself to the result. It was Averoff who took over the leadership when Rallis was made the scapegoat for the party's disastrous showing in the 1981 election. But however much the shine may have rubbed off Papandreu's PASOK since then, New Democracy, under Averoff's leadership, scarcely constitutes a credible alternative government.

Rallis's book provides many revealing insights into the idiosyncratic nature of the Greek political system and, in particular, into the *paraskinia*, the back-stage manoeuvres that delight a press whose antics make the British popular press appear a model of rectitude (Rallis recounts with relish an account of a meeting with Papandreu which was reported in detail in the papers before it had actually taken place). In a highly centralized system the tasks that are devolved upon the prime minister are indeed burdensome. We find Rallis taking charge of earthquake relief, fighting department-store fires at four in the morning, comforting distraught parents besieging a hospital to find out if their children were among nineteen spectators crushed to death at a football match and sorting out the mortgage and pension problems of the Bar Association. Even while on an official visit to Sweden he is telephoned for his instructions as to how to deal with the effects of a severe snowstorm.

Charity

Trouble has done her good,
trouble has stopped her trivializing everything,
giggling too much,
glittering after other people's husbands.

Trouble has made her think;
taken her down a peg,
knocked the stuffing out of her.
Trouble has toned down the vulgarity.

Under the bruises she looks more deserving;
someone you'd be glad to throw a rope to,
somewhere to send your old blouses
or those wormy little windfalls.

CONNIE BENSLEY

(Incidentally, do Greek prime ministers ever communicate other than by telephone?)

One of the most interesting passages gives the inside story of the furor surrounding the burial of Queen Frederica in the family vault at Tatoi in February 1981, when Rallis's transparent decency got him into trouble with both right and left. Telephoned at 6 am by ex-King Constantine with the news of his mother's death and with the request that she should be buried in Greece, Rallis's instinctive reaction was to say yes (provided that the funeral service took place on the family estate at Tatoi and not in the Metropolis as Constantine had requested), subject to the approval of the cabinet and the president. The cabinet duly gave its approval, but President Karamanlis, whose feud with the royal family was of long standing and who had effectively hacked Constantine's return in 1974, was unenthusiastic.

When Rallis gave the go-ahead for the funeral with the proviso that the royal party did not remain on Greek soil overnight, for fear of left-wing and/or royalist-inspired *epistolia*, Rallis was criticized on all sides. Papandreu described the decision to allow the funeral to go ahead as "a provocation to the overwhelming majority of the Greek people", while the former king declared that the restrictions added bitterness to his grief. In the event, the funeral passed off without major incident. Pointedly and tellingly, Rallis observes that when, two years earlier, the body of Kostis Kiliannis, the former leader of the Communist Party of Greece, had been returned for burial in Greece there had not been a murmur of protest. Kiliannis it was who bore a heavy share of the responsibility for the barbarous killing of Nicholas Gage's mother so movingly recounted in *Eleni*. Whatever Queen Frederica's failings, her "crimes" against the Greek people were scarcely in the same league.

Rallis's problems over the funeral are a paradigm of the way in which he found himself increasingly squeezed between Papandreu's leftist demagoguery and the fanaticism of the far right. As the elections approached he embarked on the hopeless strategy (which he now concedes to have been mistaken) of simultaneously trying to attract disaffected centre voters and supporters of the far-right *Elliniki Parastasi*, which had made a surprisingly strong showing in the 1977 election. Leading a party that was demoralized, disorganized, defeatist and far from unified, Rallis had no chance of standing up to the PASOK steamroller. Gracious in defeat, he remained an MP after having been ousted as leader, but, like some latter-day Cicero, he retired to his country retreat on Corfu for long periods to reflect on the present situation of his country. The first fruits of these reflections was *Ores Efhyvnis*, which became an immediate best-seller. This he has followed up with *Khoris prokatastasi gia to paron kal ta mellon* (Without bias for the present and the future) which has also shot to the top of the best-seller lists.

This is essentially a critique of PASOK's first two years in power, undertaken, Rallis says, in part because the *Allaghi*, or Change, occurred when he was prime minister and, in consequence, he feels some responsibility for what has

happened since. If he is going too far in suggesting that none of PASOK's promises made in opposition have been implemented, his indictment is formidable and his criticism well founded. He is particularly effective in his discussion of last summer's agreement over the future of the US bases, pointing out that while in opposition Papandreu accused New Democracy of preparing to sell out to the Americans, the agreement that Papandreu himself negotiated, despite the furor with which it was announced, secured no greater advantages for Greece than the deal that Rallis had in mind. It is seething, too, about Papandreu's puzzling indulgence towards the Polish military junta, an attitude which seems inexplicable given that so many of Papandreu's present attitudes were shaped by the indifference that he encountered in his efforts to mobilize the Western democracies against the grotesque camarilla of the Colonels. His own hand talk of progress towards normalization of the situation in Poland is uncomfortably reminiscent of the kind of humbug mouthed by many Western leaders during the dictatorship. Given his own relatively successful stint as minister of education under Karamanlis, Rallis's critique of PASOK's educational policies and, in particular, of the chaos in the universities, is particularly cogent.

But if it is easy to criticize PASOK, in many respects what is now happening in Greece is merely the mirror image of the state of affairs under the unreconstructed right in the days before 1963, an unreconstructed right of which Rallis was a prominent member. Indeed he now concedes that the institutionalized harassment of the left during the 1950s only served to radicalize a whole generation of young Greeks. That PASOK should now be packing the state apparatus with its own supporters, *pace* Melino Mercouri's recent declaration that Greece is the very model of a meritocracy, may be regrettable but it is certainly understandable, given the stranglehold enjoyed by the right for much of the period since the war. Moreover,

Rallis's somewhat ponderous critique does not go very far in explaining the PASOK phenomenon. PASOK's idiosyncratic trend of populist socialism is difficult to place in the West European political spectrum. That this should be so is not altogether surprising, given that Greece's historical experience has been radically different from that of the other member states of the European Community. Nor is there any reason why political alignments in Greece should necessarily follow the pattern of the industrialized states of Western Europe.

In future years Greeks are likely to look back with some nostalgia on the period of the Rallis government, when the state-controlled television made some hesitant but visible steps in the direction of impartiality and when, as Rallis proudly boasts, nobody lost his job on account of his political views. The very antithesis of the charismatic leader in a country where chrisim is all, Rallis emerges from both books as a patiently even painfully honest and sincere man. It may be that at some point he will abandon his present position as the detached observer, commenting on the political scene more in sorrow than anger. It is not too fanciful to imagine him emerging once again as the leader of a New Democracy purged of its unregenerate right wing. Moreover, by Greek standards of political longevity, he is still a relative stripling. But whether he would be able to rally a demoralized right against a formidable opponent who clearly retains a powerful power-base remains to be seen.

But already Rallis is assured of a modest place in Greek history. Modesty is indeed the abiding impression left by his writings. He used, for instance, to walk from his home to the prime minister's office and did without the extravagant motorcade that accompanies Papandreu on his travels. On election night, having suffered a crushing defeat at the polls, he conceded defeat as soon as the likely outcome was beginning to emerge and went home to pick up a book. How many political leaders today would be capable of such self-effacement?

THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF

William Morris

VOLUME 1 1848-1880

EDITED BY NORMAN KELVIN



The life of William Morris (1834-1896) is revealed in significant new detail by his complete surviving correspondence, brought together here for the first time. Including many previously unpublished letters, this collection not only bears witness to Morris' day-to-day activities and friendships, but also reflects his keen response to landscape and architecture, his sense of social responsibility, and his interest in the techniques of the applied arts.

Volume 1 covers Morris' student days at Oxford and marriage to Jane Burden; the first twenty years of Morris and Co.; his success as a poet with the publication of *The Earthly Paradise*; his two trips to Iceland; and the start of his socialist career. The letters of the late 1870s show Morris' capacity for tireless devotion to a cause, and document his work for the Eastern Question Association and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

\$71.50

Princeton University Press

41 William St., Princeton, NJ 08540

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

The district of SoHo in lower Manhattan is so named, not because of its London cousin or after the old hunting cry, but because it lies South of Houston Street. This marks it off from the Village, and from its southern neighbour Tribeca which, as the triangle below Canal Street, also had an anonymous baptism. SoHo still has the reputation, which SoHo used to have before it became clogged with slums, of being the domicile of artists and bohemians. In recent years, it has fostered innumerable galleries and auction rooms, and its once-despised lofts are the studios of uncounted painters. Nor is it an area of garrets and short commons. Smart restaurants and grand openings are general, as are mutual admiration and reciprocal reviewing.

Many hands have itched to prick this bubble. And now the hour has brought forth the man. Junius Secundus, equipped with a wheel-shaped apparatus fit to bust the finest butterfly, has penned *The Sohoist: or, The Masque of Art*.

Close by the Hudson, in Manhattan's town, The iron palaces of Art glare down On such n, wandering in the streets below, Perambulate in ghastly SOHO, A spot acclaimed by soviets and by bards As facing chamber of the *Avant-Garde*. 'Tis there, dread *Dulness* dwells in sweats and gloams,

Gnaws her brown nails, and shakes her sable plumes. Junius Secundus hurled his bolts from the ramparts of the *New York Review of Books* of March 29, and no artifice was required to see the hand of Robert Hughes, art critic for *Time*, author of *The Shock of the New*, and the latest victim of the Australian *fablous* for heroic couplets. He flayed and mocked the whole "Neo-Expressionist" clientele of SoHo as creeps and spongers, suggesting in passing that they indulge dope ("Whilst rubbing shoulders with the nearly great I impartially selling *Snack and Real Estate*") and are only in it for the easy money. Incidentally, that last couplet is fairly representative of the scansion.

Certain kinds of fun are to be had in decoding the characters. "Julian Snorkel" and "David Silly" translate pretty easily as Julian Schnabel and David Salle, a duo of post-Pollockians who spend at least as much time in self-publicity as they do at the easel. Schnabel's showings have been eroded by the moneyed and the trendy - Poor SoHo's cynosure, the dealer's dream, Much wind, slight talent and vast self esteem - and Hughes obviously feels that his measured prose criticisms have failed to do the job.

This has all been pending for some time. The "literary" world is scornful, and perhaps a bit jealous, of the pelf and promotion enjoyed by the "art" world. Glamour and instant success seem more available to the dauber than to the scribbler. Moreover, the art reviews and magazines have become shameless puff-papers. Unlike writers, New York's artists seem to function as a flock, migrating together to exhibitions in California and Europe, and burying each other in bouquets. The encapsulating

anecdote about Schnabel and Salle concerns an exchange of paintings between them. Schnabel chose a Salle from his studio and bore it off. When the time came for Salle to return the compliment, he arrived at his friend's studio to find only one painting on offer. It was his original gift, overpainted by Schnabel, who soothed him by saying, "There - we'll make art history."

Hughes believes that contemporary fashions among American painters are trashy and incoherent; raiding art history, without perspective or depth, in search of gimmicks and logos. To call the movement "Neo-Expressionist" (the preferred term) is simply to postpone judgment on whether it has a tradition or not. Ted Mooney, a novelist (*Easy Travel to Distant Planets*) as well as an editor at *Art in America*, told me that he thought Hughes's effort at art world was in danger of ignoring criticism from non-members, and of disappearing into cynicism and inflation.

Hughes was especially tough on the vogue for graffiti emulation in painting (how long ago it seems since the *New York Times* referred to the spray-can droogs of the subways as "little Picassos") and predicts the coming collapse of the great art hype in brisk technological terms. He's almost certainly too optimistic there - Andy Warhol's ("Andy Warble") fine comment was that, "Anything said about me is true." There will have to be further engagements between the indignant hearties of the pen and the pampered aesthetes of the brush.

While all these bladders are flailing downtown, Broadway may have found its Kenneth Tynan. An extremely muscular and pitiless article by Frank Rich, published in the *New York Times*, invites us to consider why the American stage is in such a pitiful case.

He begins by surveying what is not happening. John Updike's essays never refer to an American play or playwright. Critics and writers like Mary McCarthy, Gore Vidal and Elizabeth Hardwick, who used to be interested in crafting plays as well as reviewing them, have turned away. Jonathan Miller, asked recently about the importance of Broadway, replied, "It's just a sewer." Theatrical talk or inspiration seems no longer to form any part of intelligent discourse. Yet the theatre-going public is larger than ever, and Broadway reports new and meretricious "smashes" every month.

Mr Rich identifies a lack of seriousness and commitment in the plays of today. But he does make the vulgar mistake of saying that subject-matter can define seriousness. Many box-office successes have dealt with lofty matters such as suicide, incurable disease, rape, murder and other solemn topics. Broadway is by no means, as Tynan said of the West End when he found it, committed to the Loamshire and French-window production. So, where is the disconnection between fact and value?

Rebounding from a character in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, who argues to the effect

that playwrights miss the point by being polemical and should try to "alter people's perceptions", Rich contends that we need a higher synthesis than that. At first, I was depressed to see him say that the mores of television are the problem. It seemed trite even if true. But, as he points out carefully, even the most gifted television dramatist works from a "concept" to a play, and is often asked to write a script to suit a particular actor. The semi-conscious spread of such values can mean that no matter how urgent and "relevant" the theme, the treatment will be facile and superficial.

As his champion, Rich produces Sam Shepard, whose plays and whose writing about plays ought to be better known. Shepard says unaffectedly that "ideas emerge from plays, and not the other way around". All else is mere hokum and cleverness. Yet Shepard, whose play *True West* has had serious critics in awe, has never had even the sniff of a Broadway production. His output is complex but accessible, and he doesn't think it enough, in order to dignify the action, to have a grave subject like extinction or bisexuality. So, no action for him. It is, says Rich, "quite possible that Mr Shepard will never be produced on Broadway".

The response to Rich's broadside has rather borne out his pessimism. Joseph Papp, of the Public Theatre and the New York Shakespeare Festival, concluded that the problem was an inverse relation between the cost of a ticket and the worth of a show. The solution was, therefore, more subsidy for seats and tickets. What was that about the price of everything and the value of nothing? The irony here is that Mr Shepard may get his well-earned recognition. But this - if it should happen - will only be because of his lucky break in another sphere. As the acknowledged star of *The Right Stuff*, and as the husband of Jessica Lange, he has caught the attention of those who might otherwise have overlooked him. Whether he can survive that kind of recognition remains to be seen. Ain't it the way?

The recession in publishing is deep enough for most people, and the launching of a major new imprint at such a time ought to be treated as unmitigated good news. But this month's unveiling of Paragon House, with a \$5 million budget

and a projected 100 titles per year, is actually doubleplusgood. It is to be the publishing flagship of the "Reverend" Sung Myung Moon. This sinister windbag already controls three very rank daily news-sheets in New York and Washington, the losses of which are topped up by his legion of "donors" and his nimble way with tax avoidance. The story of Moon's repulsive cult has been well documented elsewhere and vindicated in British and American courts. What concerns me here is the gullibility of the American academics who are dignifying the absurdly-titled Paragon House. The chairman of the editorial board is Frederick E. Sontag, who announces himself to be Robert C. Denison Professor of Philosophy at Pomona College in Claremont, California. And then there is his associate Morton Kaplan of the University of Chicago. "I have come to believe", says Kaplan, "that the Reverend Moon is an absolutely sincere religious leader."

Well, Paragon is sincerely going to publish Mr Kaplan's hook *Science, Language and the Human Condition*, which I await impatiently. It has sincerely made him a paid member of its editorial board. Since he elsewhere insists that the "Reverend" will exert no control over the selection of the list, why does Mr Kaplan feel the need to endorse him as a "religious leader"? Moon's claim, after all, is to be the returned Messiah. His "Divine Principle", the bogus theology which is drilled into his book, holds that Adam, Christ and Moon are in lineal descent. Many people in publishing who can use the money have stayed away from this new effort as soon as they learned of its provenance. Moon's cult is one of those that is easy to join and very difficult to leave. Perhaps, given the credulity of some of our clerics, the same may be true of Paragon House.

The winners of the 1982-84 Harold Morton Land Translation Award are Robert Fitzgerald for *The Aeneid* (reviewed in the *TLS* of February 24) and Stephen Mitchell for *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*. The sixth Harold Morton Land Translation competition is now open, and publishers are invited to send books of verse translation from any language into English, published this year, to the Academy of American Poets, 177 E 8th Street, New York, NY 10128, before 1985.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Julia Briggs's *The Stage-Play World: English Literature and Its background 1580-1625* was published last year. Robert Browning's *Medieval and Modern Greek* was published in a second, revised, edition last year. David Cannadine's *Lords and Landlords: The aristocracy and the towns 1774-1967* was published in 1982. M. T. Clancy is the author of *England and Its Rulers 1066-1272*, 1983. Richard Clogg is a lecturer in Modern Greek at King's College, London. Hilary Davies is co-editor of the poetry review *Argo*. Fran Dimshaw is a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford. Tim Dooley is editor of the poetry review *Green Lines*. Douglas Dunn's long poem, *Europe's Lover*, was published in 1982. Stephen Fender's most recent book is *American Literature in Context 1620-1830*, 1983. J. Forbes Munro is editor of the *Journal of African History*. Robert Harbison is the author of *Eccentric Spaces*, 1977, and *Deliberate Regression*, 1980. J. C. Harte's books include *Gupta Sculpture*, 1974. Christopher Hitchens is the Washington correspondent of the *Nation*. Hermione Hobhouse's books include *Thomas Cubitt: Master Builder*, 1971. James Hunter is the author of *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 1976. Jonathan Keates's collection of stories, *Allegro Possibilities*, has been awarded the 1984 James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Ann L. Mackenzie is associate editor of the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*. Edwin Morgan is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Glasgow. Rodney Needham's most recent book is *Against the Tranquillity of Atoms*, 1983. David Nokes is a lecturer in English at King's College, London. Roland Oliver is Professor of the History of Africa at the University of London. Alan Paterson is Senior Lecturer in Spanish at Queen Mary College, London. Nicholas Phillips is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Edinburgh. Sidney Pollard's books include *The Waning of the British Economy*, 1982. Michael Friedlich is Reader in History at the University of Durham. Claude Rawnes's books include *Gulliver and the Gentle Reader*, 1973. Japan Raychaudhuri is Reader in Modern South Asian History at the University of Oxford. A. J. Sherman's *Island Refuge: Britain and refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* was published in 1981. Andrew Sinclair's books include *Jack: The biography of Jack London*, 1977. Charles R. Stebbins is Professor of English at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. Anne Smith's novel, *The Magic Glass*, won the Author's Club Award for first novels in 1982. Anne Stevenson's most recent collection of poems, *Minute by Glass Minute*, was published in 1982. David Walker is Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings, Scotland. Keith Walker is a lecturer in English at University College London. Robert Wicks's *Travels: Fate of a revolution* was published in 1979. M. W. Woodhouse's autobiography, *Something Ventured*, was published in 1982. Hugo Young was political editor of the *Sunday Times* from 1973 to 1984.

Letters

'Cub'

Sir, - In their letter (April 6) abusing Peter Reading's poem "Cub", Peter Holland and his co-signatories have found a novel and impudent formula to deflect criticism of their incompetence to make sense of the plainest poetic English. "We would regard any quibbling about how to read the poem as inappropriate. Antisemitism is too serious a matter to be trivialized", they say. So it is, and so saying they trivialize it. The argument is sadly familiar in other contexts: "This crime (rape/terrorism/Communism/Zionism) is so heinous that those accused must be punished whether guilty or not. To question the verdict is to connive at the crime."

It is not a quibble to point out that the "fat juicy jeep of Israel's", to the boy militiaman's eye, a fat and juicy target; any other interpretation suggests paranoia at the Woody Allen level ("Did you hear that? He said 'Jew have lunch yet'").

Nor is it a quibble to suggest that the lines "nobody looks for a motive from these Old Testament slitters - I thick hate is still in the genes. I learned the boy was aged twelve" refer immediately to the boy, and not his target, since not even the most malignant antisemitism would call return fire from an ambushed vehicle motiveless. The Old Testament (still obtainable from many good bookshops) narrates recurrent incidents of bloody tribal warfare, in which only one side is Jewish, though both are frequently Semitic. Only in this more extended sense is the poem's narrator (not of course identical with the poet) antisemitic. He is also wrong. Hate is not in the genes: it has to be inculcated and incubated, spread by the treason of scholars who prefer a reflex response to reflection. ERIC KORN, 51 Lady Margaret Road, London NW5.

Sir, - Both sets of correspondents, Shirley Kaufman and the Cambridge Six (Letters, April 6), seem to me mistaken in their estimate of Peter Reading's poem in elegiac couplets, "Cub".

The Arab boy is not treated with "pathos" but as a monster, and the hate travels both ways (Arab-Jew, Jew-Arab).

More important still, this is a "persona" poem. Of such, you can't write "Mr Reading tells us", as though it were his own opinion and not that of the euphoric who is speaking.

Was Browning ever married to a Duchess? Was Dickens ever a Jewish trainer of thieves? Or Shakespeare a Jewish merchant in Venice? Or, come to that, was Ted Hughes ever a hawk?

If Shakespeare is to be held personally responsible (by academics) for every word his characters utter, or every novelist for his characters' expressed opinions, we're in for a bad time. QAYIN EWART, 57 Kew Road, Lower Richmond Road, London SW15.

Sir, - I think it was Paul Johnson in his old *New Statesman* days who once cautioned all would-be ironists by suggesting that, as with early motorists who had to employ a man with a red flag to walk in front of them, so a distinctive signal should be set off in print before any ironical passage was used.

I happen to be the publisher in book form of Peter Reading's poetry.

I am also a deeply committed Jew; further, I am, particularly in recent years, when the ugly weeds of antisemitism have so widely taken root again, sharply sensitive to both international and intellectual anti-Jewish feeling. After the Roald Dahl episode, Reading's short but devastating poem is much needed. It embodies with almost appalling concentration those cruel and mindless views, so recently expressed, that the invasion by Israel of the Lebanon equals the Holocaust - so we're all quiescent and it's open season on the Jews again.

"Cub" brilliantly satirizes these attitudes, but, Sir, I think in future you will have to use red flags of some kind, for your readers are clearly not what they once were. Or are we to believe that Swift advocated infanticide and cannibalism? T. G. ROSENTHAL, Secker and Warburg Ltd, 54 Poland Street, London W1.

Gobineau Reconsidered

Sir, - Students of Gobineau would have welcomed the prominence given (March 30) in recent reprintings, and especially to the second instalment of the admirable Gallimard edition of the selected *Oeuvres*. Peter Fawcett's generally sensitive review strikes me as marred, however, at one crucial point. He states, unequivocally, that Gobineau was not a racist. We have, of course, to be cautious about applying that term, coined in the twentieth century, to any figure from an earlier age. Yet it has proved a useful designation for systems of explanation which centre on the belief that, in Gobineau's own words, "the inequality of races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of its destiny".

Fawcett's attack on the usage in this case appears to be based on two considerations: that Gobineau's ideas about the evils of miscegenation reflected "much of the best anthropological thinking of his day" and that he believed mankind to be "irrevocably doomed". Each point is, in itself, correct. But why should either lead us to Fawcett's confident conclusion? Regarding the first, would it not be wiser just to recognize that, as Marvin Harris in particular has demonstrated, nineteenth-century anthropology is deeply marked by racist modes of thinking? As for the second, the fact that Gobineau derives from his deterministic theory a set of utterly pessimistic, rather than more conventionally redemptive, conclusions makes him not a non-racist but simply a racist of an exceptionally interesting kind.

These correctives have no more general significance. It is proper to stress, as Fawcett does, Gobineau's considerable talents as storyteller. But we also need to be wary of whatever part of any recent rehabilitation may have relied on two related misperceptions: the first involves a tendency to interpret the *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* as dealing more with the richness of man's diversity than with the scale of congenial inferiority and decay, while the second involves the assumption that Gobineau's literary reputation needs to be preserved by underplaying the significance of racism within the overall corpus of his writing. These are approaches which Pierre-Louis Ray has recently challenged in *L'Univers romanesque de Gobineau* (1981), the most valuable of recent studies. For him, it is the theme of racial hierarchy which gives to the mature *oeuvre* that broad unity which Gobineau himself so often stressed; and it is this same theme which circumscribes that individualism so eloquently professed in the later imaginative writings.

These points amount to a plea that, while avoiding all fallow and anachronistic reference to "proto-Nazism", we ought to continue to treat the *Essai* as occupying the central position in Gobineau's intellectual development. His case, like that of Céline, ought to make us face the paradoxes raised by a symbiosis between the possession of indisputable talent and the harbouring of deep contempt for notions of common humanity. On this view, even the fictional production often has its own fundamentally didactic intent, and thus it demands to be assessed as an integral part of a philosophy which, even across the diverse genres of its utterance, remains; in Ray's words, "stubbornly directed towards the mastering of positive truths". In short, if with Dr Fawcett we "set aside" too promptly Gobineau's "less palatable opinions", we shall miss one challenging part of the problem which this *immo indigne* continues to present to political and literary analysts alike.

MICHAEL BIDDISS, Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences, University of Reading, Reading, Berkshire.

Antoine Watteau

Sir, - J. M. Nash (Letters, April 6) has his opinion; I have mine. I see no reason for the apostrophe of the "this will not do" variety. In my event we are not so far apart. Where we differ is on the point of Watteau's conscious knowledge of an art-historical tradition. Professor Nash assumes that Watteau was as highly aware of Dutch emblem paintings and the Garden of Love motif as he is himself. Watteau may indeed have become aware of them in the

course of his trade as a copyist, but what Nash takes to be knowledge can never have been more than suggestion. And even our statements in this effect must be hypothetical. The longer I serve as an art historian the more convinced I am that the artist has the last word. The fact that the artist very rarely chooses to speak this word should make the art historian err on the side of caution rather than assurance.

ANITA BROOKNER, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 20 Partman Square, London W1.

Christian Belief

Sir, - Gerald Bonner's letter (March 9), commenting on Dennis Nineham's review of the Archbishop of Canterbury's *Windows onto God* (February 24), demands a response. To respond in the same spirit: "there is something distasteful in the spectacle of a man" engaged in the public profession of theology who does not appear to understand the intricacies involved in asserting that the historicity of the Resurrection is a dogma.

The theology of the eighteenth century, like that of other centuries, is not all of a piece. There was certainly "superficial scepticism" in the Enlightenment. But some of the theologians of the Enlightenment had begun to recognize the difficulty that lay in trying to determine historical truth. A look at what was once a standard theological textbook, Albrecht Schweizer's *Von Rehnarus zu Wrede* (The Quest of the Historical Jesus), would show quickly that the controversy begun by Lessing's publication of the Wolfenbüttele Fragments has continued to resound in theological circles. Not only Liberal Protestant thought, but also Protestant neo-orthodoxy is the inheritor of the Enlightenment's theological struggles. Even Karl Barth had to acknowledge the influence of Lessing. The latter raised the question of faith in the Resurrection above the level of mere fact, mere Gradgrindery. Such nineteenth-century theologians as Coleridge and Kierkegaard continued raising the question. Even theologians who would not describe themselves as Liberal Protestants would not consider that radical questioning a "disastrous legacy".

A fundamental theological understanding of the Resurrection must acknowledge that its reality does not depend on the authenticity of a journalistic, realistic, sensually detailed description of what happened. In that sense there has never been a dogma of the historicity of the Resurrection. The resurrection stories are not very easily reconciled in detail, etc. Does Mr Bonner need to be told these things? We doubt it. The simple faith of Christians - learned theologians, prelates and literates - rests on the testimony of the Church to the reality of Jesus' Resurrection, on the first Easter, during the "forty days", enshrined in the stories incorporated in the Gospel, witnessed to at Pentecost, and in the continued experience of the life of the risen Christ within the Christian soul and the Church.

The Resurrection of Christ can never be historical fact of the same sort as the destruction of Jerusalem, the evacuation of Dunkirk, or the death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The Gospels do agree that the risen Christ appeared only to the faithful, not to Pilate, nor the High Priest, nor Herod. Modern Christians and non-Christians will make different things of that fact, but it might have some relevance to the question of "historicity".

There are theological, reasonable and faithful alternatives to historicist epistemologies, and they have a distinguished history. We should not be forced to choose, as Christians, between attractive lies and unpalatable truth. The sad fact that some have been so forced means that many men and women of struggling faith and goodwill have felt unable to embrace Christian faith based on a narrow historicism. It is not impossible to read the Gospels in a spirit that makes the empty tomb a problem rather than a proof, compelling the faithful to give an account of the hope that is in them, rather than pointing to a specious external authority. FREDERICK SHRIVER, ALAN JONES, General Theological Seminary, 175 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

More letters appear overleaf.

Basil Blackwell

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Letters

'The Sinking of the Belgrano'

Sir, — I clearly have failed to get Paul Rogers (Letters, April 6) and those who think like him to consider the *utilitary* dimension of the war for the Falklands. During the weeks the Task Force sailed south the Junta showed no sign of being willing to negotiate. May I now exhort Mr Rogers to put himself in the position of the Chiefs of Staff and Admiral Woodward after Mr Haig's efforts to mediate had failed?

The success of our military operations rested on the Task Force making a surprise landing, off-loading troops and a large amount of ammunition and sophisticated equipment; and, though outnumbered and without air cover, defeating the Argentinian forces by sheer speed of movement, fire power and efficiency. Anyone who had to work, as I did, on the Joint Intelligence Staff — I hasten to say in the safety of the War Cabinet offices — on the landings on Sicily, and at Salerno, Anzio and Normandy knows how hazardous this particular combined operation was.

The one thing the Chiefs of Staff must have dreaded was that the Junta would pretend to re-open negotiations and the British Cabinet would order the Task Force to cruise around in the South Atlantic. At any moment the Junta could have broken off negotiations and launched a pre-emptive strike against the Task Force. Has Mr Rogers asked himself whether the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff should have put the lives of our sailors, seamen and troops at risk and courted a devastating failure of the expedition? I suppose he would have glowed with pride to see our men and ships at the bottom of the ocean so long as he could have said that we had tried our best to get a peaceful settlement at the eleventh hour.

In military operations there comes a point of no return. The British Government had made it crystal clear that they were in earnest and the Task Force was not a gesture. Once the Cabinet judged that the point of no return had been reached it was the duty of the naval and military commanders to destroy the enemy forces and demoralize them as quickly as possible. What else were they expected to do? Fire rubber bullets?

But I hope that Mr Rogers and I can agree on two things. First, that the destruction of the *Ridley* proposals by the House of Commons in 1980 was dapperable. Second, that we should negotiate with the new Argentine government, which but for the British action would never have been elected. But it is no good hoping that the tape can be rewound to 1980. It is not only the British who must be expected to take account of realities.

NOEL ANMAN,
House of Lords, London SW1

Sir, — In continuing to defend the order by Mrs Thatcher's ministers to sink the *Belgrano*, Lawrence Freedman (Letters, April 6) argues there was no reason for them to believe that the Peruvian peace initiative was progressing. This is a perception which Desmond Rice and I questioned seriously in *The Sinking of the Belgrano*. Now, it seems, an unexpected corroborative witness has joined the debate offering what appears to be unqualified confirmation of our information. General Alexander Haig, incumbent US Secretary of State during the South Atlantic conflict, says flatly in his memoirs that President Fernando Belaunde Terry of Peru "gained acceptance in principle" from both Argentina and Britain for a simplified peace plan before the attack on the *Belgrano* (*Sunday Telegraph*, April 1). Haig, who had helped to formulate the five-point plan, adds: "But while the Junta was in the act of considering it, the submarine HMS *Conqueror* sank the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano outside the blockade zone... and the Argentines, reacting angrily to the bad news, rejected the new peace proposal."

Equally significant, another participant in the events of the period has come up with confirmatory material that would seem to underscore the credibility of our evidence. Mrs Thatcher herself now acknowledges that *Conqueror* detected the *Belgrano* group on April 2nd, and actually sighted the cruiser next day, on April 3rd. (See *Letters*, April 4). It doing so

she concedes by implication that earlier government versions of when the *Belgrano* was detected were simply not true. The crucial question posed in the book remains unanswered: if the *Belgrano* was threatening the British Task Force, as Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin and others claim so persistently, why was she not attacked before 1600 hours, Sunday, May 2?

The Prime Ministerial admission evidently did not register with Lord Lewin, who stressed in an interview that he was not informed of the *Conqueror's* contact with the *Belgrano* until "around 9 or 10 on the morning of Sunday, May 2" (*Sunday Telegraph*, April 8). Who was keeping the then Chief of the Defence Staff in the dark? Was anything else being kept from him — the Belaunde-Haig initiative perhaps? Indeed, were all members of the War Cabinet fully in the picture?

ARTHUR GAVSHON,
19 Stormont Road, London N6.

T. S. Eliot

Sir, — I had hoped that the correspondence started by Michael Hastings's play had come to an end, but as Martin Tucker (Letters, March 30) has chosen to revive Brigid O'Donovan's in some ways misleading article, and to encourage readers to buy his paper, I wish to add a word. Tucker speaks of the "humiliation and anguish" caused to Vivienne Eliot by her husband's refusal to see her. What anguish does he suppose would have been saved if there had been an interview? For the pretexts on which an interview was sought were entirely meaningless, as I can testify (I succeeded Brigid O'Donovan as secretary). And what does Mr Tucker suppose were the feelings of Eliot, exposed to public view as he was, while Vivienne pursued him? "Humiliation and anguish", certainly, but not indifference to her pain.

Why do correspondents show such eagerness to accuse Eliot of cold-heartedness? Is it jealousy of a poet's greatness? Anyone who attends to the final section of *The Waste Land* ("The sea was calm, your heart would have responded / Gaily, when invited, beating obedient / To controlling hands...") can guess how bitterly he blamed himself for the failure of his marriage.

ANNE RIDLER,
14 Stanley Road, Oxford.

'The Gypsy Language'

Sir, — John A. C. Greppin's review of Tatyana V. Ventzel's grammar of North Russian Romani, *The Gypsy Language* (February 3), must stand as supreme testimony to the maxim that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The review — only the last three paragraphs of which actually deal with Ventzel's book — consists of various observations on Gypsies and the Gypsy language presented with all the confidence of the lay "expert".

Gypsies are predictably typified as beggars or touts of chewing-gum; the word *Rom* (Romani for "Gypsy") is said to be derived from a Sanskrit word "for a person of low caste". While this etymology is a frequently repeated one, it has not been proven and a number of equally plausible, and certainly less negative, ones have been recently suggested: Sanskrit *rāma*, "husband" (a meaning it retains in Romani); or Panjabi *rām*, "wanderer", for example.

Greppin speaks of "almost bizarre sound-shifts" having taken place in the language, rendering "only a few words recognizable"; for Greppin, who doesn't speak Romani, this presumably means "recognizable" in terms of its Indo-European cognates, although the examples he gives are recognizable enough. However, Romani preserves a structure and a phonology in its conservative dialects (including the one described by Ventzel) which remain far more faithful to their Sanskrit source than do its neo-Indic sister-languages still spoken in India. Scarcely "bizarre".

Greppin goes on to discuss — almost to complain about — the adopted elements in Romani vocabulary, flippantly referring to "generous dollops" of Persian, Greek and Armenian evident in the lexicon. There are in fact fewer than forty Persian words and fewer than fifteen Armenian words in the whole language, and far fewer Greek items than one finds in English.

The original Indic vocabulary constitutes some 65 per cent of the entire lexicon — which may be compared with the 28 per cent native Anglo-Saxon words surviving in Greppin's own native English. And if "even words for numbers, part of the most basic and cherished components of a language" are adoptive in Romani, it might be pointed out that English stole "dozen", "gross" and "million" from French, and "zero" from Arabic.

Gypsies in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are not divided into two groups, as Mr Greppin states; this division is Ventzel's own and should have been presented as such. Her classification differs from several others, for example, those of Kenrick, Kaufmann or de Gila. Greppin is puzzled because the author "scarcely acknowledges" the Armenian Gypsies, although in her book she states quite clearly that she is describing only the dialect spoken in northern Russia. Mention is made, too, by Greppin, of an archaism in Albanian Romani, in order to illustrate the "idiosyncratic" nature of the different Romani dialects. The example he gives is *liudra*, "sleep", in that dialect, but in fact the same root is found in British Romani (as *liudi*) and in the eastern European dialects (as *liudi*), which are incidentally well represented in the Soviet Union. In these and other dialects the word survives, is not a retention, and everywhere means "sleep".

Mr Greppin goes on to say that "in spite of these various retentions, the Gypsies [are] finding it increasingly difficult to live a migratory life and maintain their language", as though such retentions are a requisite factor for nomadism. Furthermore, he tells us, Gypsies are "slowly losing their last clear means of identification"; apparently Gypsy identity = nomadism = speaking Romani, and without these last two Gypsies cease to be Gypsies. Many Gypsies of course have adopted a migratory life because centuries of being moved on by oppressive non-Gypsy laws have left little alternative. But a great many Gypsies have been settled for a very long time; those enslaved for five hundred years in the Balkan principalities certainly didn't go very far, and have not lost anything of their self-perception as Gypsies because they don't conform to the non-Gypsy's romantic stereotype. And as for finding it difficult to maintain their language, Mr Greppin might be interested to learn that the production of books and records in Romani is increasing, that the different bureaux of the International Gypsy Committee communicate with each other on a regular basis in Romani, and that the Romani Committee of Western Australia has had a weekly radio programme, in Romani, for the past five years. The language has hundreds of thousands of speakers in North America and a great many in South America too; on both continents the language is in little danger of extinction.

The review closes with the observation that Gypsies are without a spokesman in the United Nations. The World Romani Congress obtained permanent consultative status in that organization five years ago; the Romani flag and anthem have official recognition there. Mr Greppin believes that it will be non-Gypsy scholars who will have the last word on who and what Gypsies were, in their grammar books. As long as non-Gypsy scholars continue to publish misinformation of this kind, I predict that Gypsies will be safe and will survive, for the pursuit of the storybook characters they insist on defining as Gypsies will keep such people well clear of the real thing. YANKO LE REDZOSKO, International Gypsy Committee, PO Box 856, Buda, Texas 78610.

Jerome K. Jerome

Sir, — In his review of Jerome K. Jerome's autobiography, (March 23), Jonathan Keates ridicules the suggestion that Jerome's middle name derives from a Hungarian general, called Klappa, who used to lodge with the Jeromes. The name comes, he suggests, from a Danish architect by the name of Clapa. The former version, however unlikely, is true; as far as the suggested alternative is concerned, I should like to draw Mr Keates's attention to the fact that the author's name was not Jerome K. Jerome.

In 1848 the Hungarians revolted against

Austrian rule and fought (as they seem to do once in every century) the imagination and admiration of the whole world. Their improvised peasant army defeated the Austrian regulars and the Emperor was forced to appeal to the Tsar for help. The Tsar dispatched an army of 200,000 men and the Hungarians, facing overwhelming odds, were forced to lay down their arms. They did capitulate, with the single exception of the fortress of Komárom, on the Danube, under the command of General Klapka. They continued to resist and, in the end, secured safe conduct for themselves and left the fortress, led by Klapka, carrying their small arms and flying their flags. The General came to England and did indeed become a lodger of the Jeromes whose son, born in 1859, was named after him.

The Hungarian uprising of 1848-49 has been forgotten in England and few English people have ever heard of General Klapka. But when I was a young man in Hungary, every school-boy knew — and was proud of it — that the world-famous author of *Three Men in a Boat* had been named after the hero of our War of Liberation. To take away Jerome's middle name from the Hungarians and hand it over to the Danes amounts to a major international injustice.

GEORGE MIKES,
18 Dorncliffe Road, London SW6.

Sidney's 'Old Arcadia'

Sir, — There seems to be no limit to the capacity within some students of Sidney for false statement and false suggestion.

First, false statement. (a) Katherine Duncan-Jones (Letters, March 30) is wrong to allege that Croft does not discuss the lacunae. He does. (b) H. R. Woudhuysen (Letters, March 30) is wrong to assert that Croft mentions the Bodleian *Orlando* "only in passing". On the contrary, Croft in two places correctly claims that the hand of the scribe of the major portion of that manuscript is also to be found in the BL *Orlando* and in Phillips.

Second, false suggestion. The Otley MS, a miscellany of poems, is not the only manuscript with which Phillips, a MS of *Old Arcadia*, is "uniquely in agreement at several points", and your readers should not be misled by Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen into believing that it is. The significance of Otley could therefore only be properly assessed in the context of a full-scale study of all surviving manuscripts of *Old Arcadia*. Croft's paper did not purport to be such a study, nor did it claim to solve "all the problems the MS poses" (Woudhuysen); it was concerned to announce the Harington connection. This it has demonstrated conclusively.

Finally, I hope that in the cause of truth I may state that, contrary to Woudhuysen's disingenuous attempt to give me credit, I had no part whatsoever in Croft's important discovery and paper. I wrote to you as a reader, perturbed that a belittling notice in your influential columns should depend so much on plain misstatements of fact, and to judge by no correspondence I have received I was by no means alone in my condemnation of what the writer to me called a "disgraceful review". Amateurs of venom (Woudhuysen's word) could therefore do worse than re-taste Miss Duncan-Jones (March 2).

R. E. ALTON,
St Edmund Hall, Oxford.

William Hazlitt

Sir, — Reviewing my book *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (March 16), Pat Rogers assumes that "would not find attractive" Marilyn Butler's argument in a recent article on *Liber Amoris*, which views the novel as a transition from Hazlitt's work in criticism to his final autobiographical essays. As it happens, I have read the article and admired it. If it enforced a separation between Hazlitt's personal essays and his criticism, or reduced to mere autobiography his quality of moral concern, I would have little use for it as Rogers supposes. But I cannot see that it does either of these things.

DAVID BROMWICH,
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08542.

In the caption to the photograph of the 1945 Cabinet on page 264 of the *TLS*, March 16, Herbert Morrison was wrongly identified as Ernest Bevin and vice versa.

The pursuit of the commonweal

Nicholas Shrimpton

William Morris Today
Institute of Contemporary Arts, until April 29

William Morris was a political artist. A Marxist for the last thirteen years of his versatile life, and a Ruskinian radical for thirty years before that, he dedicated his gifts to the service of a social theory. On the 150th anniversary of his birth the ICA has chosen to stage a correspondingly political exhibition. "While posterity has accorded Morris the craftsman and designer an enduring respect," declares Teresa Newman in her catalogue (printed in the format of *Commonweal*, the newspaper which Morris edited for the Socialist League in the late 1880s), "it has ignored or belittled Morris the critic of capitalism."

This claim is the key to an insistently didactic exhibition, and it prompts two obvious questions. The first must be whether it is true. Of course, a hundred people have a screen-printed Morris fabric on their sofa, or a Sanderson's Morris wallpaper on the walls, for every one who has read "A Factory as It Might Be" or "Useful Work versus Useless Toil". But E. P. Thompson's biography, which did so much to bring the Marxist Morris to the fore, appeared in 1955 and G. D. H. Cole's widely read *Nonesuch* anthology identified Morris as a "revolutionary Socialist" twenty years before that. Posterity, one suspects, has simply expressed a rational preference for democratic capitalism. Any reprehensible ignoring or belittling that's gone on has been on the part of the British Left and William Morris Today aims itself primarily at them. A rediscovery of Morris, it is suggested, could bring about the intellectual revival for which socialism in this country is searching so desperately.

Homage to ham

David Nokes

The Dresser
Odeon Haymarket

Strangely, for a play that flaunts theatricality in every line and gesture, Ronald Harwood's *The Dresser* transfers quite naturally to the screen. Peter Yates has lavished on the text nostalgic evocations of Britain in the Blitz, bombs and ration-cards and ten-bob notes, to produce another essay in the currently fashionable nouveau-Belling genre of sentimental patriotism that has been doing so well at box-offices and award ceremonies. In an early scene "Sir", a gross but lovable tyrant played by Albert Finney, marches at the head of his little troupe of old men, cripples and nancy-boys through Salford station. Striding the blast of Nazi bombers and gouts of steam, he brandishes his cane at a quaking functionary and bellows "Stop that train!" There has been nothing like it since James Robertson Justice. Tom Courtenay too, as "Sir", a dresser, bears an uncanny resemblance to Norman Wisdom, though his mincing gait and fluting voice owe rather more to Kenneth Williams. Harwood's play is a homage to ham; an affectionate celebration of the tradition of actor-managers from Vincent Crummies to Donald Wolfit. Albert Finney, with his sad bloodhound eyes and histrionic excess captures perfectly a blend of showman, autocrat and tragedian that teeters constantly on the brink of self-parody. Like Lear, whom he plays in a final *tour-de-force* performance at the Alhambra, Bradford while the bombs fall outside, "Sir" is a grotesque hulk of battered humanity, a symbol of indomitable courage, absurd but magnificent. More than once in the film he is compared to Churchill as Yates co-travels to turn *King Lear*, like Olivier's Henry V, into a theatrical apotheosis of the bulldog breed. Offstage, though on the verge of physical and financial collapse, and in need of constant cosseting by his dresser, "Sir" is an image of moral grandeur in its underwear.

This is a film for those who like their drama strong and sweet, like tea. It is a tribute to the spirit of "mucking in" and "muddling through", in which self-raising flour serves as a substitute for face-powder and spear-bearers are transformed overnight into stars. Even the cultural snob in the troupe, played by Edward Fox, is finally won over by the ethos of improvisation and sets to cranking the wind-machine like a wild thing. The style throughout is camp tragic and the pitch seldom dips below *fortissimo*. During the storm scene, while "Sir" staggers onstage, tearing his passion to tatters and sawing the air as with a chain-saw, the rest of the company are in the wings banging timpani, crashing cymbals, shaking thunder-sheets, stamping and blasting like a demented heavy-metal band. Yet when "Sir" exits he asks, with a pained expression, "Where was the storm?"

Much of the dialogue and several of the incidents in the film are like pages torn from *The Art of Course Acting*. Harwood has deliberately included every Green Room cliché from the Scottish play to the casting couch. But when fine actors like these are allowed to indulge themselves by impersonating third-rate thespians, the result is some marvellous comic set-pieces. The script too contains many sharp Ortonesque one-liners. As Courtenay fusses round "Sir" like a nanny, his incessant chatter is laced with bitter-sweet reminiscences of a "friend" who was taken poorly in Colwyn Bay. "Very ill he was — nearly became a Catholic."

What the film chiefly lacks is any sense of irony. Walking through the blitzed streets of Bradford on his way to the theatre "Sir" encounters an old man sitting in the gutter, staring at the ruins of his bombed-out home. Immediately perceiving the symbolism of the situation, "Sir" offers the man two complimentary tickets for *Lear*, a sentimental gesture entirely in keeping with the uplifting tone of this film. Later that night, as "Sir" gives his triumphant performance of *Lear*, there is not a dry eye in the house, from the gallery to the orchestra pit. Even the ranks of usherettes can scarce forbear a tear. The film wallows nostalgically in theatrical myth and magic, seeking to recreate an atmosphere of less subtle, more heroic times. As the curtain goes down on *Lear* and "Sir" shuffles off to the Green Room to die, we are left with the unmistakable sense that this was his finest hour.

COMMENTARY



"The Diers Chaucer", 1956, a lithograph by Barbara Freedman from the exhibition of his paintings, illustrations and designs at the Tullianus Gallery, 42 Lovers Lane, London NW1 until May 18

nineteenth-century design. The assumption that everything was philistine vulgarity until the coming of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co in 1861 has long since crumbled. An exhibition which set, say, Morris's St George's Cabinet (1861) against William Burges's Yarmouth Cabinet (1858) would rescue him from the peculiar isolation to which his own gifts as a self-publicist have sometimes condemned him.

Topics such as these need not involve any improper neglect of Morris's insistent political interests. They would, however, provide a more satisfactory visual experience than the fifteen propaganda photographs of the Nicaraguan revolution (chaps on trucks waving fists in the air) which fill half a wall at the ICA. If we are to be convinced of the pertinence of Mor-

ris's work to contemporary problems, what we need to be shown is less the existence of the contemporary problems than the quality of Morris's achievement.

What this exhibition and its accompanying book (160pp, ICA, £6.95, 0 905263 340) suggest is that Morris was not, in fact, a very interesting or original thinker. Always derivative, first from Ruskin, then from Marx, his gifts were those of a propagandist and demonstrator. The book contains too many short pieces by too many contributors to mount a sustained refutation of this view. The exhibition deliberately suppresses his practical demonstrations in favour of his abstract thought. The impression which emerges is that the news from nowhere is a long way short of a snop-

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COMMENTARY

History without histrionics

Julia Briggs

SHAKESPEARE

Henry V
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

The chorus of *Henry V* so often invites us to "eke out our performance with your mind" that audiences either wonder what Shakespeare was worrying about, or else they assume they know. And, yes, the play is padded out with jokes even more hoary and bewildered than ancient Pistol himself – the English weather, the funny accents of fringe Britishers, the even funnier attempts of foreigners to speak English. The play's many beautiful lines seem to float in a void, free from the currents of feeling that should imbue them with their proper force. Despite Shakespeare's evident horror of war, his hero displays a callow mixture of gung-ho aggression and do-or-die heroics, and his oratory seems calculated to elicit a chauvinistic response which may have gratified the first Elizabeth, but is patently inappropriate under the second. So how, apart from conjuring up our thoughts, should the director deal with these disparate elements? Adrian Noble's solution in the new Stratford production is to take it as straight as possible (except for the chorus who carries the camp into the rest of the play), to keep the action fluent and continuous and let the excitement of events rather than language make the main impact. His interpretation springs from an admirably conscientious, if faintly puritanical, reading of the text: there is a prevailing unease at the play's rhetoric, but otherwise the lines are delivered clearly and intelligently, occasionally a little too fast. Visual gimmickry (sternly discouraged by so much scene-setting) is kept to a minimum.

Three unwarranted "special effects" have crept in under the guard of those "flat unraised spirits" that act as a deterrent to any director's spectacular ambitions: a steady and historically well-attested downpour soaks the miserable English soldiers on the eve of Agincourt, providing a pointed visual reminiscence of the

First World War, fought over the nearby fields of northern France. The French court then descends, godlike, on golden tea-trays, in order to discuss armour and horses and "the low-rated English play at dice", a moment of artifice slightly out of key with the deliberately limited scenic effects elsewhere. Finally a series of candles is lit for the slaughtered French nobles which provide a poignant backdrop to the conciliatory – and amatory – finale. This last scene, skillfully cut and particularly well performed, is one of the highlights of the production: Cecile Paoli makes an enchantingly elfin Katherine, and Kenneth Branagh's Henry seems paradoxically more at home as a fish-out-of-water soldier at the French court than he had done leading the field.

Earlier difficulties arise from the self-dramatizing martial character of Harry himself: this is a part to tear a cat in, and Kenneth Branagh will never be one of nature's cat-tearers. One obvious temptation is to substitute a complacent schoolboy heroism for the charisma that the original must have possessed. Branagh tastefully avoids the first, but never really manages to suggest the second. His is essentially a small-screen performance, exact and truthful but flinching slightly from the blatant rabble-rousing of the big set speeches: "Once more unto the breach . . ." is taken in too much of a hurry and, exceptionally in this production, ineptly staged so that it is partly delivered over his shoulder as he scales the Harfleur walls. The speech for Crispin Crispian's day could do with a greater delight in its own eloquence. Branagh is happier in the more intimate soliloquy on the idol ceremony, more moving on his father's usurpation and the French massacre of the boys left behind the lines: "I was not angry since I came to France / Until this time".

Histrionic performances are currently unfashionable, and would probably endanger the ensemble playing that is one of this production's greatest merits, yet their absence cannot but be felt in a play so conscious of its own theatricality, especially in a few key roles. Pistol, characterized by his stagestruck Marlowian exclamations, has dwindled to a mild eccentric, more White Knight than Wolf in an off-

night. And Pistol's style should be sufficiently over the top to allow the hostess to remain safely under it. Her account of Folstniff's death needs to be artlessly heartfelt if it is to prompt the tears it invites. Here the intense moments are occasioned by the war, and more grief is shown for the murdered boys than for the off-stage death of the fat knight. Fluellen, in an outstanding performance by Siôn Probert, delivers his most inconsequential observations clasp the corpse of one of them. Among the rest of the cast, the English court are supportive but indistinguishable apart from a skinhead Earl of Cambridge and Brian Blessed as Exeter. The French court are more individualistic, their distracted king insulating himself from reality behind his silken earflaps, while the Dauphin is unexpectedly animated by delusions of Napoleonic grandeur. All in all, an enjoyable and coherent production, which might benefit from taking its opening invocation of the muse of fire a little more seriously.

The lady killers

Jonathan Keates

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk
ANTONIO VIVALDI
Gladito Triumphant
FREDERICK DELIUS
Margot La Rouge
CHARLES LECOCQ
Dr Miracle
Camden Festival

The eponymous heroine of Delius's *Margot La Rouge* is literally caught red-handed by the Paris policeman who bursts in upon the *estaminet* where she has just stabbed her lover's murderer. The scene is emblematic of the operas at this year's Camden Festival, for it was surely more than mere coincidence which proposed a common theme of women and murder. Victims are severely knifed, beheaded, poisoned with mushrooms and pushed off a bridge (in Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*, which I was sadly compelled to miss, the soprano dies from inhaling the noxious scent of violets presented to her by a jealous rival). *Dr Miracle* is simply the exception which proves the rule: the potential effects of an envenomed omelette are thwarted by the timely intervention of the hero disguised as a quack.

If Vivaldi's Judith carries out her deed of patriotic derring-do with a certain aristocratic distaste and Delius's Margot is hallowed by the romance of the gutter, Katerina Ismailova – in Shostakovich's opera – has nothing to redeem her from sheer sensual brutality. The libretto, based on Leskov's story of "The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District" has no easily memorable parallel for its portrayal of the unremitting violence and coarseness of the heart of nineteenth-century provincial life. Everyone is either cruel, greedy, venal or stupid and Katerina herself, far from being a Russian Emma Bovary or Thérèse Raquin, earns our compassion simply through the resistless sexual energy evoked by Shostakovich's score.

This music – the original, rather than the revised and softened 1962 version – is a treat that has been denied for too long to London opera audiences. The Logan Hall's acoustic was friendly neither to the composer's wonderfully lurid string-writing nor to the augmented brass at the back of the auditorium, but the compelling rawness and vibrant colours shone through in moments such as the inexorable entracte *passacaglia* linking the scenes of Act Two, and the ministerly underlined kiss which clinches the murder of Katerina's husband.

Howard Williams's conducting wisely aimed at a coherent enthusiasm and a broad general view of the work rather than laying emphasis on finer details. His cast acted up superbly – in the case of Phyllis Carran, who made a scowling, pointing Belle Davis out of Katerina, quite unapologetically, though the vocal line was occasionally taxing to her resources. The redoubtable John Gibbs as her father-in-law stood the character admirably enough to provide his tur-



A drawing of R. D. Kinn by Jim Dine, from the exhibition of portraits and self-portraits by Arthaus, Auerbach, Kinn, Freud and their circle at Marlborough Graphics Gallery until May 12.

deress with a convincing motive. David Stephenson, however intelligent as Sergei, the servant who seduces his mistress, was perhaps too soft-grained to suggest so callous a lover, but Roger Bryson and Anne-Marie Owens gave vivid definition to their roles among the train of convicts in the harrowing final scene.

Judith in Vivaldi's Venetian oratorio of 1716 could hardly present a greater contrast to the ferocious Katerina. Giacomo Casati's cleverly-paced Latin text (given here in an English version by the director) dwells cunningly on the allure of her young widow's coyness. The act of murder, however glorious the cause, revolts her, but the production was careful not to imply any incipient attractions in Holofernes himself, an imperious braggart whose softer moments ultimately fall to weaken Judith's resolve.

The recitative throughout seemed infinitely tougher than the arias, many of them constructed in the curiously boneless manner so beloved of the composer, with the stress upon sensuous orchestral lines and the frequent absence of a supporting bass. If the singers sought to match this wispy, effloated style (if not so rarely any fault of theirs: Jean Bailey and Karen Shelby as Judith and her maid Abri (a first cousin to Pirelli's Belinda in her undiminished optimism) discovered passion only in the extended central episode in Holofernes' light, and even Helen Kucharek as the general's page Vagus needed more than the music could offer to establish her role. Paul Horton's designs and direction suited themselves to the starkness of what was, after all, an oratorio not intended for the theatre.

Margot La Rouge, Delius's fifth opera, was wisely given in its original French, using the recently discovered autograph score premiered in St Louis last year. The dramatic atmosphere has dated enchantingly: murder among the absinthe bottles and the *filles de joie* in the sort of Paris where artists imagined themselves to be engaged in something called Seeing Life. The music is everything we might expect from the creator of *Konigskind* and *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, full of sultrian Delian chromatic sobs and bursts of folk-dance, but touched also with that fatal penchant for over-orchestrating the tunes almost exclusively to the orchestra while the singers add the texture with dialogue both accommodating and odd.

It was a worthy revival, given with wholehearted stylishness in Robert Casati's excellent production. Anne Mason and Maria Moll were sensitively contrasted as Margot and her rival Lili Béguin, and Kim Begley as the soldier Thibault ("par ici les plus-pieux" about the tart) brought pathos and energy to his music.

Casati's versatility showed to advantage in his staging of *Dr Miracle*, Lecocq's entry for an operetta competition in which he and Bizet took joint first prize. The spirit of Donizetti rather than any Offenbach *avant la lettre* here, beneficently over the ensembles and the whole charming squib was let off with immense yet.

Apparitions from the East

Robert Wistrich

STEVE E. ASCHHEIM

Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness 1800-1923
331pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £23.75.
0299 091104

Just over a century ago the great German historian Heinrich von Treitschke sounded the ominous warning to his fellow countrymen that "across our Eastern frontiers there pushes, year after year, from the inexhaustible Polish cradle, a troop of ambitious, trousers-selling youth, whose children and children's children will some day dominate Germany's stock exchanges and newspapers". The antisemitic imagination in Germany, at all levels of consciousness, was thereafter to be increasingly obsessed by the spectre of a mass immigration of *Ostjuden* (East European Jews) bringing with it all the real and the fictive evils of the ghetto – dirt, disease, immorality and subversion. In the wake of war, defeat and revolution, this so-called *Ostjudentum* assumed after 1918 a peculiarly hysterical quality whipped up by the radical Oceanic Right – encouraging, already then, the kind of draconian administrative measures and popular lackluster that clearly foreshadowed Nazi extremism.

Yet the same ghetto Jew, that "apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks", whom the young, down-and-out Hitler encountered in Vienna thirty years after von Treitschke's diatribe and who supposedly opened his eyes to the deadly threat confronting the German-Aryan race – this alien, mysterious presence was really only a pretext. For in the world of *Volksrecht* antisemitic fantasy, sophisticated distinctions between modern and medieval, western and eastern, enlightened and ghetto Jew tended to blur and dissolve into one continuum of race, linking pariah and parvenu in a common conspiracy. Moreover, as Richard Wagner had argued as early as 1850 in his prophetic *Das Judentum in der Musik*, the real danger to the Germans did not lie so much in the old caftan Jew as in his camouflaged, modern counterpart who had already succeeded in penetrating the key positions of cultural influence. This invisible domination by interlopers, cut off from their own traditions and those of the host society, excited the fear of the German intelligentsia far more than did the backwardness of the ghetto which, by the late nineteenth century, was a historical memory for most German Jews and Gentiles.

Nothing illustrates the self-delusions of the assimilated German *Bildungsjuden* better than the failure to grasp this truth and the desperate efforts of a section of the German Jewish bourgeoisie to deflect antisemitism by running

down the *Ostjuden*. This difficult, sometimes tortured and always ambivalent relationship of brothers by faith and strangers by culture, is the central theme of Steven Aschheim's incisive and fascinating study, one which casts a new and frequently poignant perspective on the peculiarities of the emancipation experience in Germany. The strange encounter between Germany's Jews and the *Ostjuden* (both within and beyond the Reich borders) is not only a key episode in modern Jewish history, illuminating as it does the cultural estrangements within Ashkenazic Jewry opened up by modernization and enlightenment – it also opens up novel ways of understanding the role of myth, symbol and stereotype in the development of national consciousness.

The originality of Aschheim's approach lies in his skilful evocation of the protean quality of the *Ostjude* stereotype – in changing historical circumstances – for the self-definition of German Jewry. The caftan Jew was at once a reminder of the past and a potential threat in the present, both a reflecting mirror and mirror-opposite, a symbol of degeneration and then later of regeneration; through this prism German Jewry could see its own insider-outsider dilemma created by the Enlightenment and the conflicting demands of *Deutschheit* and *Judentum*. On one level the issue was clear enough. If Western Enlightenment represented the norm of rationality, refinement and *Bildung*, then the Eastern Jew could only be conceived as antithesis. The ghetto, Talmud, caftan and earlocks would have to go along with all the other trappings of separatist culture such as the corrupt Yiddish "Jargon".

For liberal German Judaism, the pioneer of modernizing trends throughout the Jewish world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there could in fact be little room for compromise. The spiritualization of the ethnic components in Judaism (as in Hermann Cohen's universalist monotheism), the attack on Polish Hasidism (as in the writings of Heinrich Grunz), and on traditional Rabbinism – all were part of a more general assault of German Jewish science against "barbarism". In the name of civilized values. For the sons of the Enlightenment, cultural inequality was self-evident and not to be denied by the wishywashy rhetoric of pluralism. *Ostjuden* had to be delivered from the unholy trinity of dirt, disease and degeneration; their manners, language and religious habits had to be cleaned up.

For the post-emancipation generation of middle-class German Jews the problem acquired a more acute edge as a result of the Russian pogroms, the rise of antisemitic agitation and the growing ripples caused by immigration into the Second Reich. Feelings of shame and fear at the possible reactions of non-Jews mingled with older reflexes of tradi-

tional solidarity, producing a strange spectrum of embarrassed responses to the plight of the new immigrants. As Aschheim points out, German Jews excelled in organizing a rational welfare and emigration system (getting *Ostjuden* out of Germany and westwards was clearly an urgent matter) and a comparative study might well show that they were also reasonably successful in integrating the newcomers. On the other hand the conspicuousness of the *Ostjuden* irritated and impeded the process of assimilation, even though the numbers involved were not that large (78,000 *Ostjuden* in Germany by 1910, i.e. 12.8 per cent of the Jewish population). Highly visible and vulnerable to expulsion, their presence nevertheless helped keep antisemitic stereotypes alive, even as these began to focus more and more against the modern, emancipated German Jews.

It was the emergence of Zionism, however, which led to a dramatic shift in the perception of the *Ostjude*, one which gave him for the first time a positive role to play in the modernizing of the Jewish people. Indeed some Western Zionists even constructed their own idealized counter-myth to the Enlightenment, glorifying the East European Jews as the source of authenticity, folk vitality and incorruptible national traditions. For *fin-de-siècle* German Zionists in search of a *Volks* and alienated from the sterile emptiness of bourgeois German Judaism, the *Ostjude* had an obvious attraction. Already Moses Hess, the prophet of socialist Zionism, had sensed this truth in turning his back in the 1860s on shallow Western Reform Judaism and pointing to the vitality of Hasidism. At the end of the nineteenth century, German-Jewish radicals like Nathan Birnbaum, Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber went to still further in rehabilitating the *Ostjuden* as a positive model for deracinated German Jews. Whereas the first generation of German Zionists still thought in philanthropic terms of sending their poor, persecuted Eastern brethren to Palestine (Franz Oppenheimer characteristically regarded Zionism as an enterprise in which German Jews were the "directors" and *Ostjuden* the "doctors"), their successors literally worshipped at the feet of the *Volks* whose roots were in the Eastern ghettos.

Aschheim rightly stresses the centrality of Martin Buber's role as cultural mediator in this transformation. In Buber's writings (especially his Hasidic tales) an alternative framework of identification was created in which *Ostjuden* became the "real Jews" and Westerners their pale reflection. Neo-romanticism and *Volksgeist* thought (in its Jewish offshoot) by stressing the organic values of community, myth and rootedness as against the positivistic rationalism of the Enlightenment, naturally led to this inversion of stereotypes. As a symbol of the

primal power of Jewish *Volksgeist*, the East European Jew could finally come into his own. For the radical Zionist generation inspired by this rhetoric of Jewish renaissance, the ghetto could now be seen as a source of rejuvenation and literary inspiration. Even for such alienated Central European Jewish intellectuals as Franz Kafka, the Yiddish theatre and the culture of the *Ostjuden* offered a way back across the desert of rationalism to primal spontaneity and the lost warmth of *Gemeinschaft*.

Nevertheless, as Aschheim documents in some detail, romantic idealization could not resolve the built-in contradictions in the German *Ostjude* dichotomy. Pride in race, respect for religious integrity, joy at rediscovered kinship and unity (feelings frequently experienced by German Jewish soldiers on encountering their Eastern brethren at the front during the First World War), were one thing; "backward assimilation" or complete cultural demodernization was quite another. German Jewish writers and artists like Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck in *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* might idealize the East European Jew as an emblem of spirituality in a cruel, materialistic world but the barriers in real terms were not thereby removed. What had occurred was an inversion of the nineteenth-century stereotype of German *Kultur* redeeming ghetto *Unkultur* and its replacement by a new *volks* myth of the East European *Ur-Jew*. This positive image born out of disenchantment with the values of German and European humanism (and a reaction against the smug complacency of bourgeois Judaism – one thinks of Gershom Scholem's biography here) was relatively free of any racist chauvinism in spite of the common vocabulary it shared with the antisemitic German Right. Indeed it was primarily socialists on the Jewish and Zionist side, as Aschheim shows, who utilized the liberationist potential of *volks* thought, to redress the negative image of the ghetto Jews.

This is only one of many paradoxes in a study which seeks to illuminate a past historical reality through the changing play of mirror images and archetypal representations. It is a method which has its problems, for not even such a subtle interaction as that between German and East European Jews can be satisfactorily explained in terms of cultural perceptions alone. Geography, politics and sociology – while not ignored in Aschheim's account – are not always adequately integrated into the analysis, so that at times the discussion remains too heavily superstructural. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarian dimension, which would have provided a great deal of additional evidence for exploring the author's chosen theme, is unfortunately largely absent. But these are minor criticisms of a gracefully written and rewarding study of two estranged worlds of Ashkenazic Jewry locked together in an uneasy symbiosis.

Organizing the Holocaust

A. J. Sherman

JOCHEN VON LANG (Editor)

Eichmann Interrogated: Transcripts from the Archives of the Israeli Police
293pp. Bodley Head. £8.95.
0370 305167

Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, head of the Bureau for Jewish Affairs at the Reich Security Headquarters, and therefore chief executive of the Nazi programme to exterminate the Jewish population of Europe, was abducted in May 1960 from the refuge in Argentina where he had been comfortably living under an assumed name, and brought to Israel to stand trial in the Jerusalem District Court for crimes against humanity and against the Jewish people. The trial lasted from April to December, 1961, and ended in Eichmann's conviction and sentence to death. After the dismissal of several appeals, the sentence was carried out on May 31, 1962, and Eichmann's ashes were scattered at sea one day later.

These are the bare facts of a proceeding that at the time aroused passionate interest in Israel and throughout the world, and subsequently gave rise to a flood of often angry debate on legal, moral and historical issues raised by the trial itself, the nature of Eichmann the man,

and his unique role in a mass murder without precedent for its vast scale, ruthlessness and technical proficiency. This volume, a considerably condensed and fluently translated selection from the Israeli Police records of Eichmann's pre-trial interrogation, affords a valuable picture of Eichmann that amply documents the Jerusalem Court's description of him at the trial itself: "an alert mind; the ability to adapt himself to a difficult situation; cunning; and a glib tongue". Only when cornered by confrontation with specific documents, often those he himself signed, was Eichmann prepared to admit any responsibility; but even when clearly caught off guard, he consistently pleaded his very limited authority and the overwhelming imperative of obedience to orders from his superiors.

As the Eichmann trial and the dreadful events it recalled receded in collective memory, despite many attempts – some of dubious relevance – to document the dimensions and horrors of the Holocaust, it is salutary to have a record that makes plain, in however abbreviated a form, the nature of the individual who consciously, zealously and without remorse sent millions of his fellow-humans to torture and death. The voice is unmistakable:

"I just did as I was told. That's where I found my – how shall I say? – my fulfillment. It made no difference what the orders were . . . For I had nothing to do

with killing the Jews. I never killed a Jew . . . And I never ordered anybody to kill a Jew . . . No, never. I'm guilty because I helped with the evacuation. I'm ready to pay for it."

Or again, as in this exchange between the Israeli Police interrogator, Captain Avner Less, and Eichmann:

Less: You say you had nothing to do with the killing?
Eichmann: That's right.
Less: But you delivered the people to be killed.
Eichmann: Yes, sir, that is true, insofar as I received orders to evacuate them. But not all the people I evacuated were killed.

And then, retreating even from these admissions, Eichmann once more, the most precise of bureaucrats:

Set up shipments? No, Herr Hauptmann, only the schedules for the shipments. The shipments themselves were set up by the evacuating authority.

Those with some background knowledge about Hitler's war against the Jews, and the persistence to follow throughout this book Eichmann's tortuous and self-serving responses to straightforward questions, will gain further insight into the person he carefully built and unwaveringly presented to the world. Even more disturbing is the insight the book gives into the robot-like man beneath the mask, anything but banal, for whom the organization of mass murder was a thoroughly absorbing and satisfying creative task, in which no detail was

too small to merit personal, enthusiastic attention. Eichmann epitomized the demonic energy of those functionaries who even as the Reich was collapsing carried out the letter and spirit of Hitler's Final Solution. At his trial, Eichmann recounted with pride that it was the duty of his department to "make strenuous efforts to ensure that the cars should be used to their maximum capacity". This phrase, said the Jerusalem Court, "says everything".

For readers without prior knowledge of a vastly complex operation that spanned all of occupied Europe, and engaged thousands of officials at all levels of the Nazi hierarchy, the editors' linking commentary will be insufficient to establish the dimensions and chronology of the crimes discussed in this transcript. The book's usefulness is further reduced by the absence of an index.

New Humanities and Academic Disciplines: The Case of Jewish Studies, edited by Jacob Neusner. (187pp. University of Wisconsin. £26.10. 0299 097501) contains papers originally presented at a conference on graduate education in Jewish learning held at Brown University in June 1982. Jacob Neusner provides an introduction: "From 'Yeshiva to University', and a first chapter, "Models of Jewish Studies in the University".

Magnates of feudalism

M. T. Clanchy

FRANK BARLOW
The Norman Conquest and Beyond
 318pp. Hambledon Press. £22.
 0907628 192

JAMES W. ALEXANDER
Ranulf of Chester: A relic of the Conquest
 191pp. University of Georgia Press. \$16.50.
 08203 06738

William of Malmesbury called the battle of Hastings "that fatal day for England". The Norman Conquest generates more historical writing now than ever before. Academics assemble annually to read papers at William the Conqueror's war memorial at Battle and 1066 remains the only date that every school-boy knows. Frank Barlow's contribution to this period has been substantial, with his biographies of Edward the Confessor and William Rufus, his two-volume history of the English Church, a textbook on the feudal kingdom of England from 1042 to 1216, and editions of manuscripts including the letters of Arnulf of Lisieux and the Winchester Domesday Book.

All this energy put into books means that the seventeen articles of Barlow's reprinted here, ranging in date from 1936 to 1981, comprise ancillary works, or *disiecta membra* as he calls

them in his preface. The Latin tag is characteristic of his style. His preface, in which he describes his teachers at Oxford in the 1930s, is the freshest page in the book: A. L. Poole introduced him to the "grandeur of academic life" (Oxford's perennial spell?); V. H. Galbraith was the jester at that court; F. M. Powicke, wrapped in a greatcoat against the chill of his vast room in Oriel, "set a standard to which I knew I ought constantly to aspire". Judging in each case by their writings, Barlow excels his masters in volume of output, accuracy of detail, and clarity.

He is a traditional historian in the best sense of being an expert in Latin chronicle and biography. His concerns are the careers of kings and prelates and not the collectivities of cultural or economic life, although the two most recent articles reprinted here, on medieval hunting and on touching for the king's evil, depart from this norm. The slight opening piece on "The Holy Crown" suggests that Barlow does not think such sociological themes are worth the apparatus of footnotes he gives to "Edward the Confessor's Early Life" or "The Canonization of Hugh I, abbot of Cluny". All in all, this collection of reprints deserves a place in any library alongside Barlow's other books and it will be most useful as a supplementary work. His work stands the test of time

because it is rooted in a love of detail and a meticulous regard for the sources.

James W. Alexander's book is a biography of Ranulf III, who was Earl of Chester from 1181 to 1232. As Duke of Brittany, through his first wife, and a landowner in Normandy by inheritance, as well as holding for a time the earldoms of Richmond and Lincoln, Ranulf was the most powerful magnate in the Anglo-Norman realm during its period of crisis. He experienced King John's loss of Normandy and Magna Carta, fought alongside William the Marshal at Lincoln, went on crusade to Egypt, and made his county of Cheshire into a principality.

This long span of life and power caused Bishop Stubbs to describe Ranulf as "almost the last relic of the great feudal aristocracy of the Conquest". This is the meaning of Alexander's subtitle "A relic of the Conquest". It is characteristic of the loose thinking in this book that the author notes how misleading it is to describe Ranulf as a survivor of the Norman Conquest without realizing that this invalidates his subtitle. Ranulf was not a relic of a bygone age, but the builder of a lordship which imitated the king's in its attention to law and bureaucratic organization.

Despite the lack of personal details about medieval individuals, the lives of magnates can

be pieced together by collecting their charters and establishing a chronology. But Alexander has not done the right sort of research for this and he is obliged instead to balance up the secondary opinions of historians supplemented by references to printed materials. The result is a mass of notes and bibliography, comprising nearly half the book, which make an excellent starting-point for a study of Ranulf but not its conclusion.

The subject was originally suggested to the author by Sidney Painter, the biographer of William the Marshal. Alexander's chapter headings are in the same style as Painter's: "The Young Earl", "Loyalist Baron", "Prud'homme". But Painter based his work on the unique contemporary life of the Marshal, whereas Alexander only has routine chronicle sources and legal records. Even so, something could have been done to reconstruct personal relationships from the references in such records to Ranulf's family, companions, officials and dependents. To take one example from many, a case from 1218 shows that Ranulf's mother was still living and that he had made her the dubious gift of land in Lincolnshire confiscated from a rebel. Alexander takes little interest in such individual details, as his evasive index emphasizes, and he is therefore in no position to write a definitive biography.

Fruits of penitence

Charles R. Sleeth

MARY FLOWERS BRASWELL
The Medieval Sinner: Characterization and Confession in the Literature of the English Middle Ages
 160pp. Associated University Presses. £15.95.
 0 8386 3117 7

In this short but substantial work, Mary Flowers Braswell examines the reflection in late fourteenth-century English poetry of the thorough and orderly penitential manuals, mainly of the thirteenth century, which grew out of the decree *Omnis utriusque sexus* (promulgated in 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council under Pope Innocent III) making confession mandatory at least once a year. It is her principal thesis that these manuals and some related works, by their insistent probing of the intention, motive and will of the sinner and of the circumstances of the sin, furnished a framework essential to the rich complexity of characterization attained by Chaucer and the *Gawain* poet, Langland and in some degree even Gower.

This thesis might be greeted by some with the objection that it is an example of the fallacy "after it, therefore because of it". In my opinion, however, this objection does not hold. For one thing, poets of the early thirteenth century whose imaginative power ranks close to that of the four major Ricardian poets (the author of *The Owl* and the *Nightingale*, say, or Lagamon on his best days) do not attempt complexity of individual characterization. Besides, Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, with its multitudinous echoes of the other *Canterbury* pilgrims' tales, is itself a penitential treatise in the direct line of descent from the thirteenth-century penitential manuals. Most tellingly, Braswell demonstrates that the work of each of the four Ricardians shows familiarity with the sacrament of penance not only in its large outlines but in numerous details. The influence was certainly at work. No less certainly, other influences were at work in the same general direction: the case for some of them has been made by others, and perhaps in part is still to be made.

The translations of the necessarily numerous Latin quotations (apparently Braswell's own translations, since they are not attributed to anyone else) have a few flaws. The lack of any rendering of *solus* ("alone") in the translation (p. 26) of the opening of the decree *Omnis utriusque sexus* itself (a key word since it is the very word that prescribes private confession, the sinner alone with the parish priest), and the unsatisfactory renderings of *libens* ("willing") as "liberating" and of *verecunda* ("shame-revealing") as "modest". In the translation of Thomas Aquinas' summary of the qualities of a

good confession (p. 34), are only the most serious ones. Misprints too, through negligence on the part of Braswell and her publisher, are conspicuously abundant: there is a scattering of them in the work itself and in the notes, and more than a dozen in the bibliography, which is extensive and has been well exploited.

In one or two places, Braswell makes a stronger or more emphatic claim than is justified. One is the passage in which she treats of "Gawain's pride", as "a major motif of the poem", evident before Gawain leaves Arthur's court. Granted, Gawain has a lesson in humility to learn, and learns it only at the Green Chapel; but Braswell completely misrepresents in two ways the tone and the implications of the section of the poem dealing with Gawain's departure from Camelot. First, she says that the poet laments the "angardized pride" (line 681) that takes Gawain on his quest for the Green Chapel. But these are not the poet's words; on the contrary, they are the words of the same frivolous knights and ladies

who at the end of the poem are blind to the seriousness of Gawain's wearing the green girdle as a badge of shame, and who therefore, as Braswell herself recognizes, "have learned nothing at all". Second she says that "the comparison of the knight to the pentangle" in lines 631-5 reflects "Gawain's pride in his own perfection"; but these are the poet's words, not Gawain's, and do not support an assertion that Gawain thinks too highly of himself.

The other arguably excessive claim by Braswell is her assertion that Chaucer in his Retraction "makes final use of the penitential tradition to add one last touch of modelling to the character of his naive narrator and to end his *Tales* on a note of proper gaiety". This reading or one similar to it has had a considerable vogue since 1971 or thereabouts, but for me it is impossible to reconcile with the whole tone of Fragments IX and X of the *Canterbury Tales*: the imagery of disgusting drunkenness in the *Maniple's* Prologue; the self-revelation of a thoroughly unattractive character in the

Maniple's Tale; the sombre twilight imagery of lengthening shadows in the *Parson's* Prologue; and the *Parson's* detailed anatomy of sin in his Tale. When on page 124 we are implicitly asked to believe that Chaucer is joking when he prays to be "oon of hem at the day of doom that shulle be saved", credulity is strained to the breaking-point. I think I recognize at the end of the *Canterbury Tales* the same Chaucer (not a naive narrator) who at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* knew that "al nis but a faire / This world", after devoting five books of his intense imagination and compassion to the fates of two persons living within that fair and seeking to enjoy one of its sweetest goods. It seems to me that without attributing to Chaucer a divided personality or the timidity of old age, we ought simply to recognize him as one who possessed in its highest degree the ability to combine opposite virtues and occupy all the space between.

However, regardless of possible disagreements on such specific details, this is a book that every medievalist should know.

Proceeds of corruption

Michael Prestwich

J. S. ROSKELL
The Impeachment of Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, in 1386: In the context of the reign of Richard II
 216pp. Manchester University Press. £25.
 071900963 4

It is hardly surprising that many ministers and officials in medieval England were corrupt. There was no adequate system of salaries, and while clerics in royal service could be rewarded with rich livings, laymen were in a more difficult position. Temptation was not easy to resist. Judges accepted retaining fees from potential litigants; exchequer officials lined their own pockets, as the sum of over £12,000 found in Adam Stratton's house in Edward I's reign strongly suggests. Even though so staunchly moralizing a historian as Bishop Stubbs could argue that a measure of peculation might be excusable, contemporaries were hard on those suspected of making private profits from public office, particularly if they exercised that office incompetently. Attitudes were particularly severe in the late fourteenth century, as the case of Michael de la Pole, impeached in the Wonderful Parliament of 1386, demonstrates.

Most historians have seen in de la Pole an unfortunate scapegoat for the political failures of Richard II's early years, a man against whom insubstantial charges were trumped up, and who showed "ability and spirit" in defending himself. In his detailed examination of a

complex case J. S. Roskell overturns the views of those who have offered apologies for Richard's chancellor, and provides instead a powerful indictment. The charges against de la Pole fall into two groups. In the first he was accused of political incompetence, in failing to carry out policies agreed to the last parliament. Taxes had not been spent as directed, and measures worked out by a parliamentary committee for the reduction of expenditure and the increase of income had not been implemented. Charters had been issued improperly. One line of defence was that responsibility for policies was a collective one; and that de la Pole should not be singled out from the other royal councillors and ministers. He had issued charters only in response to warrants received from the king, and had made a saving of some 5,000 marks on expenditure at Cherbourg and Brest. Yet de la Pole had a particular responsibility as the king's chief minister, and had explicitly taken it upon himself to see that the measures recommended by the committee were carried out. The one excuse for his failures is that the Commons had not provided adequate grants of taxation for the policies they advocated to be put into effect. At best, however, de la Pole emerges as incompetent.

The other type of charge related to corruption, and here Professor Roskell shows that there was a great deal of truth in the complex allegations made by the Commons. Annuities had been improperly acquired by de la Pole, and then converted into land which was assessed at less than its true value. The lands he received when promoted to the rank of earl

were also under-assessed, to his advantage. It is striking that the Commons had good information as to de la Pole's activities, and that the chancellor was not more adept at covering his tracks both from them and from Roskell. The impression is not of a man who accumulated great wealth by misusing his official position, as Walter Langton had done under Edward I, but of an incompetent who displayed a similar lack of ability in his private affairs as in his public role.

This study does not aim to provide any fresh discussion of the legal procedures involved in de la Pole's trial: the origins and development of impeachment are out part of Professor Roskell's theme. Nor does the book attempt a comprehensive analysis of the parliament of 1386. Rather, it provides a splendidly detailed insight into the murky realities of office-holding in the later fourteenth century, and casts fresh light on the confusing politics of the formative period of Richard II's reign.

W. D. Bide's *History and Antiquities of Kingston-upon-Thames* originally published in 1852, has now been reissued in facsimile (128pp., Victoria Press, 96-98 Richmond Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, £28.00, 9509076 0 X). Bide's work, as Marjorie Tibbels points out in her introduction, values prelates' mid-Victorian preoccupations, although students will be wary of his historical accounts. These include chapters on the Church, municipal affairs and charities, together with descriptions of outlying parishes. The work includes nine full-page engraved views.

Thomas Hornor's folly

Hermione Hobhouse

RALPH HYDE

The Regent's Park Colosseum
 74pp, with 6 colour and 26 black-and-white illustrations. Ackermann, 3 Old Bond Street, London W1. £225.
 0946 18600 6

In its way, the Regent's Park Colosseum was as much a nineteenth-century phenomenon as Paxton's Crystal Palace. John Weale, in his 1851 guide for tourists visiting the Great Exhibition, wrote of it as "The most considerable building erected in London for public shows". In it, its promoter, Thomas Hornor, was pioneering a form of public entertainment as ambitious as the Exhibition, so ambitious indeed that it ruined him, and other later investors.

It was one of the many attempts to bring a new experience to the public, not only a new sensation but new knowledge of an improving sort. Through developments in printing, reprographic techniques like engraving, lithography and later of course, photography, all kinds of events, monuments, places and buildings were brought before the eyes of ordinary people. In his creation of the Colosseum with its panorama and its many side-shows, Hornor, by a fascinating mixture of scholarship and display, was an exponent of this process of communication. Ralph Hyde has told the story of this great building, so innovative in its technical improvements, and so full of ingenuity and enterprise, in this superbly illustrated book.

The exterior of the Colosseum was misleading: it rather resembled the Pantheon, although clothed in a Greek rather than Roman style. It was designed by the young Decimus Burton to house a theatrical spectacle, one which would give the visitor the impression of a "panoramic view of London, as seen from the summit of the cross of St Paul's Cathedral". Panoramas existed already, like the charming view of Rome now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but the scale of Hornor's undertaking was so much greater that he ran into unprecedented difficulties.

The Gropius generation

Robert Harbison

KLAUS HERDEG

The Decorated Diagram: Harvard architecture and the failure of the Bauhaus legacy
 125pp. MIT Press (distributed in the UK by International Book Distributors). £20.25.
 0262 08127 X

In *The Decorated Diagram* Klaus Herdeg argues that the main thing wrong with recent American architecture is that many of its most successful practitioners studied at Harvard under Gropius and picked up some dangerous Bauhaus-inspired ideas here. Herdeg does not identify these ideas clearly but he seems to suggest that they consist of mechanized notions of perception and hence of the architect's task. But his objections are not, in fact, theoretical: they amount to a dissatisfaction with the influence of the architects he discusses and with very select samples of their work.

Most readers will be surprised to find Marcel Breuer, Philip Johnson, Paul Rudolph, I. M. Pei, Ulrich Franzen and Edward Larrabee Barnes lumped together, and will probably feel that there is something wrong with a treatment that ignores the immense differences among their various approaches to architecture, merely because thirty-five years ago they all studied at the same place. Herdeg teaches architecture, and he should know that even on the most optimistic interpretation no training is so powerful as to continue to determine its pupils' view of all design problems for the whole of their lives.

In an appendix he prints three problems that Gropius set his students and twenty-seven pages of the Harvard Graduate School of Design prospectus for 1946-47, as if these constituted important evidence of the corruptive potential of the Harvard method. The school's presentation of itself to prospective students is like any such document, a bureaucratic com-

plex, not only in making the original sketches but in getting them copied to reproduce the view from St Paul's.

He was a land surveyor, and he had produced several successful bird's-eye views of London parishes and Welsh landed estates. In 1820 he started work on a view of London from St Paul's. Originally the intention was to take it from the lantern just above the dome, but C. R. Cockerell's work on the cross, and the scaffolding it necessitated, gave him the opportunity to erect a small hut on scaffolding above the cross itself, a terrifying eyrie 420 feet above street level. His difficulties in preparing the drawings were many: not only did his cabin, secured on timber scaffolding by ropes, sway in the wind, but he had to ascend before three in the morning to get his view clear of the smoke of household fires, and once at work had to employ a servant to deter visitors from climbing up to his perch.

The original intention was to publish a series of engraved plates, but a wealthy backer per-



"Fountains Abbey, The Lady Chapel", an etching by William Westall (1781-1850), on view at the exhibition "Ruins and Follies" at the Maclean Gallery, 35 George Street, London W1, until May 4.

sued him to transfer his sketches on to canvas and to display them in a circular chamber which would give the viewer the impression that he too stood above St Paul's Cathedral. The transfer of the sketches in a vast canvas lining the Colosseum was achieved by an ingenious artist, E. T. Parris, who organized a team of house-painters, whom he found more biddable and less afraid of heights than bona fide artists. The centre of the building was occupied by a column which contained an "ascending room" operated by hydraulic power, the first passenger lift in London. There were other attractions: the Colosseum was surrounded by gardens, cunningly planned by Hornor with *ironpe-l'oeil* backdrops and an artificial ice-rink, no less than six conservatories and a Swiss Cottage, designed by P. F. Robinson.

Hornor's principal backer absconded in 1828, before the panorama was completed, and in due course the embarrassed Hornor also left the country. None the less, the unfinished building was opened to the public, and its novelty and possibly the aura of scandal attracted vast crowds. Upwards of a million visitors are said to have visited the exhibition over the next fifteen years, but even so its history was far from happy. It is a reminder of how rashly enterprising the Victorians were, how ready to speculate, often losing one fortune in pursuit of a second. Several other entrepreneurs attempted to make a success of it, notably John Broham, the well-known singer, father of the yet more celebrated Victorian hostess, Lady Waldegrave, the hostess of Strawberry Hill. He took the Colosseum in 1835 and added considerably to its attractions, but even so he had to retire a poorer man in 1838.

In 1845, the panorama was repainted by

Steadings of standing

David Walker

JOHN MARTIN ROBINSON
Georgian Model Farms: A study of decorative and model farm buildings in the Age of Improvement, 1700-1846
 190pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
 019817366 0

Farm buildings have been the subject of a good deal of interest on both sides of the Border during the last fifteen years, but more often in respect of the vernacular and functional aspects than the formal. Within the last few years, however, Pierre du Prey has published studies of those designed by Sir John Soane, and John Martin Robinson himself studies of those by Samuel Wyatt, which he has now extended to a nation-wide survey of the entire field of model farm building from 1700 to 1846. Very few examples, however, antedate 1747 when Daniel Garrett showed how the rising professionalism in agriculture might be given a worthy architectural expression in the first of a great flood of pattern books. Over the next hundred years a few breed of provincial architects adapted and built the designs published in them.

Broadly, Georgian model farms are of two main types, the home farm, managed for the landowner himself, and those built for tenant farmers. The former are usually large courtyards with either a monumental stable court-type facade or a sophisticated plan form, but Dr Robinson shows a few in which cattle sheds clustered round the central nucleus of a monumental barn. Those built for tenants, although sometimes quite sophisticated in layout, have less grandiose steadings but tend to have the more stylish houses necessary for a new generation of farmers who had to be men of some standing, able to find up to £500 a year in rent and £2,000 for stock. These in turn fall into two subgroups, those in which the farmhouse is integrated with the steading (for the better supervision of the farm servants - on the model proposed by John Webb as early as 1650 - and those in which the farmhouse is a small mansion set apart from the farm buildings to a sizeable garden.

Of these basic types Robinson illustrates many interestingly planned variants. Some of the more sophisticated buildings such as those

Paris and his assistants, who "materially improved the sky and distant country, giving to the picture the appearance of a clearer atmosphere . . .". A Glyptotheca, or Museum of Sculpture, was added, designed by William Bradwell, chief "machinist of Covent Garden Theatre". Queen Victoria and Prince Albert saw the Colosseum at this stage, spending an hour and a half exploring its many different spectacles, finally viewing the lesser panorama of "London by Night".

The Colosseum, the enterprise only begun during the summer of 1851, when the Crystal Palace lured provincials and foreigners to London. The building, complete with all attractions, was put up for sale but failed to make its reserve. In 1864, it closed its doors for the last time, but was not demolished until 1875, for the building of Cambridge Gate, the only Victorian terrace in Regent's Park. Its brief moment of fashionable elegance was captured by Ackermann in 1829, in a series of five hand-coloured engravings, and these have been reproduced for this extremely handsome leather-bound volume. Traditional methods have been used throughout, the engravings are printed in screenless colotype and actually hand-coloured in the nineteenth-century way; the text is printed from metal type. Ralph Hyde has provided a very scholarly and well-researched account of a little appreciated building. It has supplemented the coloured illustrations with a wide range of other contemporary material, showing the machinery, the artificial ice-rink and the devices used by Hornor for his ascent to the cross of St Paul's. All this is a considerable addition to London history, and it is perhaps sad that only 200 copies of this book have been printed, inevitably confined to a fortunate few book-collectors.

by Mylne, Adam, S. P. Cockerell, the Wyatts and Soane are already familiar to us from recent publications; less well known to most readers will be Robert Adam's steading at Fullerton (mercifully not demolished, as stated here), the group of castle-style steadings inspired by Garrett's plates at Castle Barn, Badminton, Park Farm, Raby and Castle Farm, Sledmere, Alexander Nalson's more alarmingly Gothic towered polygon at Roseneath and Archibald Simpson's highly sophisticated Gaudy design at Gordon Castle, of which a photograph would have been preferable to the small-scale elevation illustrated.

Robinson excels in his chapters on barns, cowhouses and pigsties (even pigs could be subjected to Bonthamite geometrical planning it would seem), poultry houses and dairies, the ladies' province within the farm, of which he illustrates more than a dozen superb examples. Less uniformly satisfactory is his gazetteer, many of the inclusions in which have necessarily been gathered from others, and thus are at times less informative than they would have been had he visited them all himself. Nevertheless he does appear to have identified the majority of the more interesting examples, if not throughout England, certainly in Scotland, where monumental home farm steadings incorporating the stables are relatively common; they differ from their English counterparts in placing much less emphasis on the barn and in occasionally having spires, and together with detached dovecots (a somewhat doubtful inclusion, being really a late survival of an old custom rather than an element of the model farm) account for about one-third of the sites catalogued.

There are a few other minor flaws in the book: some more discussion of the advent of water, horse and steam power to threshing might have been useful, and one misses from both the main text and the gazetteer the interesting Cliswick-vill-profiled steading at Carnaloch which may be the work of Isaac Wre and may anticipate the Great Barn at Holkham in square-plan form. There are a few slips on counties and less importantly a few typographical errors in the spelling. But this is an extremely helpful book which, by creating an informed appreciation, should arouse greater interest in the conservation of such buildings, now threatened by changed farming methods.

The flight from the countryside

Roland Oliver

ANTHONY O'CONNOR
The African City
359pp. Hutchinson. £15 (paperback, £7.50).
009 1529808

To many observers Africa appears as predominantly a rural continent in which towns and cities spell the influence of foreigners as rulers, traders, industrialists and miners. For about half of Africa such a notion is historically not incorrect. When the Portuguese began to travel in Ethiopia in the early sixteenth century, they noted a dense rural population but no towns. And from there all the way south to the Cape, the characteristic pattern of settlement was one of maximum dispersion. Population might be dense or light according to ecological circumstances, but either way homesteads tended to be spread over the countryside, so that even villages were rare. Kings and chiefs here and there attracted quasi-urban concentrations of officials and soldiers, artisans, wives and servants, but these were temporary agglomerations, built of impermanent materials and relocated at frequent intervals. The granite kopjes of Zimbabwe and the Transvaal made possible a few longer-lived exceptions. Otherwise, the towns of pre-colonial eastern Africa were the coastal settlements planted by Arabs and Persians as a by-product of the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean. The towns of the eastern and southern hinterland are almost without exception the legacy of European imperialism – the colonial capitals, the ports, the railway junctions, the mining centres, the administrative headquarters, the mission stations.

In western Africa, on the other hand, there was an indigenous tradition of urban settlement which went back, in some places at least, as far as the final centuries BC. The towns were mostly quite small. They were built of mud and uncompassed by walls, which enclosed a certain amount of agricultural land as well as that occupied by dwellings. It would seem that in normal times the inhabitants carried on their farming activities far beyond the walls, with some members of each lineage living out in country houses and bush camps, but that in time of war most of the population could be at least temporarily supported within them. A few of these walled towns grew during the later Middle Ages into large cities. Some, like Timbuktu and Gao, Katsina, Kano and Zaria, were situated in the open savannah to the south of the desert, where they formed the southern termini of the trans-Saharan camel caravans. Others, like Ife and Benin, Bobo-Dioulasso, Kong and Kumasi, were in or near the forest belt, and were centres of industry as well as trade, in the Yoruba country of south-western Nigeria there were by 1900 at least ten urban settlements with populations of more than 50,000. Ibadan alone had nearly 500,000. Anthony O'Connor has, however, made a false distinction between what he calls the "indigenous" cities of Yorubaland and the "Islamic" cities of the Maïnde and the Hausa. Both in fact stem from the same West African tradition, which long antedates Islam, and which, if the myriad smaller examples are taken into account, provides the predominant settlement pattern of the whole region.

Among the towns of Africa today, the essential distinction is between those of traditional and those of colonial origin. There are of course some hybrids, for example Lagos, where a traditional Yoruba town was adopted as the seat of a colonial government. In the traditional town everyone speaks the same vernacular language, and nearly everyone has a live connection with the immediately surrounding countryside. In the ex-colonial town, even if it grew out of a simple district headquarters, the population is apt to be drawn from many language areas. It includes clerks and policemen and teachers, representing the central government of the new nation and recruited on a nation-wide basis. It includes mechanics and traders and contractors, who have settled in the town for its economic opportunities and not because their relations lie near by. These people have no local roots. They may not even eat the local food. Their only common language is likely to be that

of the former colonial power. In the larger ex-colonial towns, such as those which grew up around ports or mining areas or the sources of hydro-electric power, the polyglot character of the community is much more pronounced, since here even the least skilled labour may be recruited from the opposite end of the country, or perhaps from beyond its borders. The largest ex-colonial towns are in every case the capitals, where as many as twenty or thirty vernacular languages may be in regular use, and where even quite basic requirements in food, clothing and building materials may come from overseas and be dependent for their continued supply on the national balance of payments.

O'Connor's book is about cities rather than towns, and it concentrates mainly on the capitals, which is where the greatest changes have occurred and are occurring. The significance of an annual average growth rate of five per cent may not come home to the innumerate reader, until it is realized that this means that the population of Lagos, for example, grew from 270,000 to 3,000,000 between 1950 and 1980, and that of Kinshasa from 220,000 to 2,700,000 during the same period. Were the same trend to continue, both cities would have populations of around 6,000,000 by 1990. The most obvious consequences of such rapid growth are in the failure of plant to keep pace with people. Most urban families inhabit a single room. Water and electricity are available for only an hour or two each day. The back streets are unpaved, and often undrained. In the city centre traffic is almost at a standstill, but it is nevertheless quicker to drive eight miles with a simple message than to try to use the overloaded telephone system. The less obvious, but possibly more serious, consequences of rapid urban growth include the unsustainable pressures imposed on health, education, transport and policing services, and the perpetual worry about food supplies.

The main cause of urban growth is of course migration from the countryside, and it is here that the special skills of the geographer, admirably mobilized by O'Connor, have most to contribute to the analysis. One excellent way of doing geographical research is to hang around bus-stations asking travellers where they have come from and what is the object of their journey. Another is simply to knock on doors. Where, as in Nairobi or Lusaka, only one inhabitant in four has been born in the city, information about migration is not far to seek. And it is a fact of the utmost significance that, in the view of the migrants themselves, they were not driven out of the countryside by poverty, by the subdivision of family holdings on the one hand or the advance of mechanization on the other. Those who migrated were not the poorest people in their home areas. Rather, they were those with the enterprise to want to do better. Very often the idea of moving was sown in school, particularly in the better schools offering a full primary education, which tend to be located in the more prosperous rural areas. Once sown, the idea had usually been tested by short visits to a town, to stay with relations who had already moved. With all its difficulties and discomforts so obvious to the outside observer, urban life is judged by significant numbers of Africans to offer greater rewards and better prospects than over the more favoured rural areas.

That is the first point, and it may well cause dismay to the geopolitical planner who believes that Africa, with all that sunlight, is destined to supply the world of the future with plantation products and especially with sugar for alcohol to take the place of present-day oil. The next point, however, is a little more reassuring. It is that, as yet, urban Africans, even in the ex-colonial cities, have not by any means severed their links with the rural areas. There is a great deal of coming and going. The extended family has town members and country members. Townspeople go "home" for seed-time and harvest. Country children come up to town for school terms. Most townspeople go to the country to look for a wife. Prosperous townspeople build a second home in the country and hope to retire there; meantime it is occupied by their rural relatives. The bus passengers travel up to town with live chickens and big bundles of yams or bananas, and return in due course with a bicycle or a sewing-machine

used precariously on the roof. In the cities of Africa there are as yet few of the destitute pavement-dwellers who are the despair of Asia. It is evidently much more difficult to get comprehensive information about jobs than about movements, but it appears that most city-dwellers are employed for at least a part of their time. The unemployed stay with relatives, and, if they fail to find work, eventually return to the countryside, where they presumably help to deter others from making the attempt. As yet, therefore, it looks like a self-regulating system in which, when towns reach their natural limit, the flow of migration could be reversed.

It may be, says O'Connor, that these relations between town and country will persist beyond a transitional period. Most city-dwellers are somewhat better off than their rural relatives, but he thinks there is little evidence of parasitism by the towns. The countryside would not be richer if the towns did not exist. And yet, and yet. One must wonder whether, a generation from now, the children and grandchildren of the migrants will be as capable of transferring themselves back into the countryside as their ascendants are today. And one must also wonder whether the political system in most African countries does not encourage the townsman to remain so, at the expense of his rural kinsman. For this the former colonial powers – British, French, Belgian and Portuguese – must take some of the blame. In their own interests, they created and left behind them economic systems in which farmers were forced to sell their produce to state marketing

Pragmatic leanings

J. Forbes Munro

JOHN ILLIFE
The Emergence of African Capitalism
113pp. Macmillan. £15 (paperback, £5.95).
033 331567

Is capitalism staging a comeback in tropical Africa? The world depression, and the failure of the various brands of African socialism to achieve their particular development and welfare goals, would seem to have eroded the older ideological certainties, exposing the intellectual cataplexy of much of the anti-capitalist tradition and throwing up the new pragmatism of Machol and Mugabe. If hostility to private enterprise, both foreign and local, is indeed on the wane, and what we are witnessing is a *sua-chango* in strategies for growth and development, then John Illife's essays on the emergence of African capitalism are appropriately attuned to the mood of the times. "What is certain", he claims, "is that, as a result partly of prejudice and partly of socialist dogma, Africa's capitalists have not yet been taken seriously enough." The aim of the four essays (originally delivered as the Anstey Memorial Lectures at the University of Keio in May 1982) is apparently to suggest that capitalism has something to offer Africa as a creative force, and as an instrument for progressive change. However, Illife is not primarily concerned to debate the relative merits of capitalism and socialism as pathways to the future. Rather, he is intent on examining the past – to discover how, why and with what consequences a distinctive, indigenous African capitalism has already come into being.

These essays, largely surveys of the existing literature, are on the whole well-crafted and readable pieces. Illife follows Marx in defining capitalism as a mode of production characterized by the exploitation of wage-labour. After a review of the limited extent to which hired labour, and therefore capitalism, was to be found in Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, it is argued that in the early colonial period the "growth points" of African capitalism moved from trade and industry into agriculture. However, the discussion of agrarian change, and more especially of how to distinguish "rural capitalists" from "peasants" in situations where labour might be mobilized by *khush*, *clentage*, share-tenancy and various other non-wage arrangements, is ambiguous. Both in the thrust of its central argument and in its conclusions.

Much more interesting and original is an

examination of "capitalists and preachers" in which, assuming a Weberian mantle, Illife looks for evidence of the ways in which Christianity, Islam, or Africa's own religions may have contributed to the development of a capitalist ethic. He suggests that, given African ecclesiastical and "pragmatic hedonism", religion could be and has been used both to support and oppose capitalist values.

The final essay looks at the rise of urban industrial capitalism since the Second World War and at the relationship between the new African businessmen and the state. "Nurturing capitalism" as practised by the post-colonial governments of Kenya and Nigeria is contrasted both with the "parasitic capitalism" of Zaïre and the "anti-capitalism" of Ghana and Tanzania. "African governments", Illife observes, "have shown that they can prevent capitalism; they have not yet shown that they can replace it with anything else that will release their people's energies."

But whatever its merits – to be found in breadth of scholarship, judicious judgments, and more than occasional insights – this short book represents no more than a preliminary reconnaissance of terrain which still remains too little explored. It is not, and probably was not intended to be, a comprehensive, balanced and integrated assessment of the forces making for the growth of African capitalism. Difficulties also stem from the way Illife's perceptions of capitalism and capitalists draw more from Marx than, say, Schumpeter.

To define as a capitalist someone who hires labour, rather than someone who takes risks in markets – land, capital and commodity markets as well as labour markets – is to adopt a very narrow approach. It results in a framework of analysis which overemphasizes production at the expense of commerce, services and finance, sectors which are themselves essential components of any capitalist mode of production. Thus, for example, despite identifying transport (portage) as an "area in which capitalist relationships were to be found in pre-colonial times, Illife does not consider the way in which transport innovation during the colonial period created opportunities for what was a vigorous and thriving element of African entrepreneurship. Moreover, while a focus on indigenous capitalism provides a much-needed counterweight to the former stress on expatriate and foreign capital, the question remains whether it makes a great deal of sense to study one in isolation from the other. "Capitalism in Africa" still seems a more appropriate unit for analysis than "African capitalism".

Centres of population

David Cannadine

ANTHONY SUTCLIFFE (Editor)
Metropolis 1890-1940
458pp. Mansell. £28.50.
07201 16163

For most urban historians in this country, "the age of great cities" means nineteenth-century England: the town halls and terraced houses, the municipal politics and speculative builders, of London and Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield. These communities were largely the by-products of the first Industrial Revolution; they formed a hierarchical and interlocking national system; and they have been the object of much recent interest thanks to the consciousness-raising efforts of the late H. J. Dyos. But whereas urban history has tended to come to a full stop in 1914, urban growth has continued and even accelerated for another fifty years, not only in Britain but around the world. The nineteenth-century age of great cities has been followed by the twentieth-century era of megapolises; national clusters of towns have been dwarfed by international networks of much larger urban agglomerations; and the provincial pessimism of Dickens's "Coketown" has been superseded by the global gloom of Mumford's "Megropolis".

Accordingly, this book is to be welcomed as a pioneering foray into the recent and international urban past, which sheds much-needed (if sometimes ill-focused) light on the world cities of yesterday – if not always of today or tomorrow. As befits its subject, *Metropolis 1890-1940* is international in coverage, interdisciplinary in approach, and cosmopolitan in authorship. In one of its two substantive sections, the subject is explored thematically and intuitively, in a group of essays which investigate the response to the great metropolis of the

intellectuals who tried to understand it and the artists who aspired to evoke it. And this is balanced by a cluster of complementary papers which describe in detail the making and management of seven super-cities. Here, in 450 tightly packed and well-illustrated pages, a distinguished team of historians, planners, geographers and scholars in the creative arts confront both the images and the realities of the modern metropolis in a work which, in its strengths and weaknesses, stands as a fitting (if perhaps unintended) sequel to Dyos's earlier brimming blockbuster on *The Victorian City*.

The essays on the aesthetic and intellectual response to the giant cities take us on a breathless tour of twentieth-century culture. Andrew Lees analyses the pre and anti-urban views of contemporary social scientists, cultural critics, political intellectuals, prophets of doom and big-city boosters; Theda Shapiro surveys the visual arts, from the Impressionists via Cubism to Futurism and beyond; Peter Keating tackles literature, with special emphasis on Joyce, Wells, Eliot and Woolf; Anthony Sutcliffe considers the cinema, from the German "city symphonies" of the 1920s, via Chaplin's *Modern Times*, to King Kong and Superman atop the Manhattan skyscrapers; David Harold Cox and Michael Nias discuss music, rather pretentiously, from the effluviante realism of Elgar's "Cockaigne" to the futurist cacophony of Russolli's "A Meeting of Motor Car and Aeroplane"; and Lars Olaf Larsson looks at metropolis architecture, from Otto Wagner in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna to Albert Speer in *Götterdämmerung* Berlin.

The specific studies are less speculative and more solidly down to earth. Patricia Gorside begins with London, and considers the varying attempts to resolve the underlying issues of regionalism, centralism and localism in its government and planning. Norma Evenson depicts Paris as enjoying a lull between two storms: after the Second Empire rebuilding of

Hausmann, and before the draconian modernization begun under de Gaulle in the 1960s. Host Mazerath looks at Berlin's brief heyday as a world city, between German unification in 1870 and its own wartime dismemberment and post-war division. Kenneth Jackson analyses New York's heroic rise from a mere marionette city to being the capital of capitalism. R. A. French portrays Moscow as the citadel of Communism; Jürgen Reulecke weighs up the forces making for centralism and for localism in the Ruhr; and Shun-Inchi Watanabe considers Tokyo as the only great "Western" metropolis in this period which expanded in a notional climate of opinion which regarded big cities unequivocally with approval.

So far, so good; but there are real difficulties in pinning down a subject so protean and amorphous as the great city. If, as it is now commonplace to admit, it is hard to define the urban element in urban history, then how much more difficult is it to isolate the big-city element in the history of the metropolis? The cities included here, for example, seem in some ways an odd assortment. Where is Chicago, whose architecture was, for much of this period, synonymous with the very idea of metropolis, and whose school of sociology was crucial in putting the big city on the agenda of twentieth-century thought? And where is Los Angeles, whose freeways and clover-leaf junctions were as important a pointer to the metropolitan future as were the skyscrapers of Manhattan? Why, on the other hand, is the Ruhr included, when it was never more than a uneasy agglomeration of urban villages, which never achieved metropolitan status or identity? And where does Moscow fit in? It may have been the metropolis of Communism, but it was smaller than Vienna or Chicago.

As this suggests, the real difficulty is that these cities seem to have had little in common in this period except that they were all big, or very big. London and New York suburbanized

very rapidly; Paris and Berlin more slowly; Moscow hardly at all. Some were capital cities, others not; some were ports, others not; some were in democracies, others in dictatorships. For New York, 1890 to 1940 was a golden age; for Paris it was a lull between two storms; and for Moscow the dates are virtually meaningless. By 1940, these great cities do not seem to have been very much more alike than they had been half a century before. The skyscrapers of New York had not yet been built anywhere else, and London could still be portrayed, not entirely implausibly, as the unique city.

If the common realities of the metropolis seem elusive, it is hardly surprising that the contemporary images of it were correspondingly hurried and diffuse. In a post-Freudian era, most creative figures were more interested in exploring the inner life of the mind than in representing the outer life of the world, and those few who actually addressed the city did so indirectly, and largely unaware that there was anything special about it. The intellectual commentators looked at all large towns, and gave no special treatment to the few super-cities. Among visual artists, the French Impressionists were as interested in water-lilies as in the Thames at Westminster, and the German Expressionists rarely depicted the city at all. Of all novels, it was *Ulysses* which caught most powerfully the sense of contemporary bewilderment which the metropolis allegedly engendered; but Joyce's model was Dublin, not Gotham City. Only a tiny minority of films took the great metropolis seriously; it was technically almost impossible to shoot films in city streets; and in any case, the majority of cinema-goers were more interested in Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. In music, the response was so varied, from the representational to the atonal, as to make generalization quite impossible. And in architecture, much of the best design work was undertaken for relatively small cities like Stockholm, Copenhagen and Amsterdam.

Where this leaves the images and realities of the very big city in the first half of the twentieth century is not at all clear. Like any book which opens up a subject, *Metropolis 1890-1940* is more exploratory than definitive, and that is as it should be. But it does not automatically follow that the flag under which this particular exploratory expedition has been mounted is in fact the right one. The conference at which most of these chapters originated as papers was sponsored by the Planning History Group, and the book arising out of it appears in a series called *Studies in History, Planning and the Environment*. In short, as Sutcliffe concedes in his introduction, this book is not so much the product of urban history pushing forwards, as of planning history pushing backwards. Planning, we are told, is now in a mess. And to give it renewed confidence and sense of purpose, what better than to look at how it all began to the first great age of metropolis? How far did the image-makers put across a picture of the giant city which influenced what the planners were thinking about it? How far, in turn, did the planners actually influence the metropolis? And how far can this dialogue between the big city and the planners before the Second World War shed some light on what has happened since?

The planning historians are to be congratulated, not only for putting the big city on the agenda of research and discussion, but also for devising an approach to it so ingenious as to bring it even within the ambience of their own applied and essentially anachronistic sphere of historical vision. But it is an uphill struggle trying to answer these elaborately posed questions in anything but the negative. It cannot be said (if let alone how) the planners were influenced in the inter-war years by the creative image-makers. Nor did the planners themselves achieve very much: they lacked the power and the money, and in any case they never could decide, even among themselves, whether they wanted to abolish, to tame or to improve the giant city. So it is not at all clear what any of this has to do with that golden age of skyscrapers and freeways which characterized the thirty years after 1945, let alone with the era of disenchantment which has set in since. As self-conscious planning history, this book is, inevitably, an unsuccessful treatment of a non-subject; but as inadvertent history, it is very promising indeed.

Mines as microcosms

Sidney Pollard

ROBERT J. WALLER
The Dukeries Transformed: The social and political development of a twentieth century coalfield
319pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
019 8218966

Between the wars a number of new collieries were sunk in the northern parts of Nottinghamshire. There were rich deposits to be found there, though at considerable depth, and the new collieries were, and still are, among the most prolific, the best equipped, and the most profitable in Britain. Before the arrival of the coal companies the area had been a sleepy rustic backwater, renowned for its beautiful landscape and dominating tiled landlords. The development of the company villages and towns to house the miners on this green-field site forms the subject-matter of this book.

Laying out and building complete settlements within easy reach of the pitheads was a major preoccupation of the colliery companies concerned: some 45 per cent of their capital budget was set aside for the purpose, and their task was by no means completed when the houses were built. For the local authorities were poor, and tended to have other priorities. Roads, schools and other public services remained inadequate for many years. The companies provided the public buildings – shops, sports facilities, even contributions to churches. Above all, they founded and controlled the social institutions, and used to the full the opportunities for determining the social behaviour, and influencing the ethos of the mining communities which had sprung up in a matter of a few years. Isolated by distance from the nearest towns and neighbouring coalfields, and by mutual hostility and incomprehension from the older villages nearby, the new colliery settlements became the involuntary objects of a social experiment, case studies of a controlled communal development.

The widely publicized simplistic views, ranging from the extreme from the hackneyed phrases of sympathetic journalists who were lost in admiration for the new houses because they

were larger and better equipped than miners had been used to anywhere else in Britain, to mere denunciations of tyrannical and dictatorial mine managers at the opposite extreme, tell only part of the story, which, as Robert Waller shows with delicate perception, was very much more complex than fashionable slogans allow. The problem to which he directs his main attention, a problem played out in miniature in the Dukeries but reflecting a critical decision of every society, was the conflict between freedom and efficiency, between individual choice and social externalities.

Symbolic for this conflict in the heyday of colliery power was the uniformed company policeman, legally powerless but equipped ultimately with the coal company's authority over promotion and dismissal at work, who saw to it that local boys behaved themselves in the street, that the village lavas remained untrodden and that the private gardens were kept neatly and fenced tidily. Trespassers against company rules in these respects, or their fathers, were hauled before the mine manager and could be threatened with loss of job and home. Capitalist tyranny? Improper subjection of free Englishmen? Hardly had the companies been expropriated and replaced by the NCB when the gardens began to fall into neglect, and cars were parked on the lawns. The remaining gardeners were discouraged, the appearance of the village was spoilt for all and the dominant impression became one of neglect, decay, even vandalism. Which is to be preferred? Surviving villagers themselves interviewed with great skill by the author, are evidently in two minds. Combine the best of both systems by social self-discipline, say the reformers. But in this world, ideal solutions serve little purpose. Societies have to be held together by and for imperfect human beings.

The historian may venture to draw conclusions from this study, by analogy, about the origins of coal-mining villages in earlier phases, going back to the industrial revolution, of which no similar firsthand information can now be made available. Some similarities there undoubtedly were: the rapid turnover of miners and their families in the early decades, making for a most unstable and fragmented

The work of rehabilitation

Claude Rawson

MAYNARD MACK
Collected in Himself: Essays critical, biographical, and bibliographical on Pope and some of his contemporaries
569pp. Associated University Presses. £30.
087413 1820

Collected in Himself brings together Maynard Mack's uncollected writings on Pope and his contemporaries over the last forty years or so. The volume, by itself, establishes him as easily the most distinguished student of Pope now living. His life-work is by no means confined to Pope (he is also a notable Shakespearean), nor is his work on Pope confined to this volume. He has edited the *Essay on Man* and the Homer translations for the Twickenham Edition (his introductions but not his commentaries are reprinted here) and written the best book on Pope's later poetry, *The Garden and the City*. Forthcoming are an edition of Pope's poetical manuscript (so imminent that it is referred to here as having appeared in 1982) and a large-scale biography, now nearing completion and due to be published next year. This cumulative record places him, with Butt, Tiltson and Sherburn, among the greatest Pope scholars of the century. He is perhaps the most productive and versatile of them all.

Like Butt and Tiltson, Mack was a member of the team which produced the Twickenham Edition. And he follows and extends Sherburn's work both as a biographer and, almost by the way, as an editor of the correspondence: *Collected in Himself* includes as an appendix some ninety pages of new letters. Pope is now perhaps the most richly and accurately edited poet in the language. In this editorial enterprise, and in their critical and biographical writings, these scholars have probably done more than all Pope's defenders since Byron to restore Pope's standing, both as a poet and as a man, from the disrepute to which it has always been prone and which became especially widespread in the nineteenth century. It's a sign of the times, not in every way healthy, that this rehabilitation should have been mainly generated in universities. Poets (Sitwell, Empson, Auden) contributed eloquently and probably preceded the scholars. But the great flowering of interest took place within Departments of English, and its most visible and often ungainly signs are to be found in the learned journals and in monographs.

Mack's essays are anything but ungainly. Three early ones, "On Reading Pope" (1946), "Wit and Poetry and Pope" (1949) and "The Muse of Satire" (1951), were particularly influential in the later stages of this revolution, when opinion was receptive but still perhaps unconverted. It is hard to realize their full impact, direct and indirect, in classroom and lecture-hall, now that the main points have been so widely assimilated that they are taken for granted by many who have not read the essays themselves. Their republication is especially welcome because they have not often been reprinted (Mack himself overscrupulously omitted them from his compilation in the *Essential Articles* series), and they retain their energy and freshness on rereading.

The first, "On Reading Pope", is one of the most vivid brief statements in defence of Pope's couplet art against the familiar charges of metronomic monotony and dead diction. "Wit and Poetry and Pope" takes on the Arnoldian co-optation of Pope as a classic of our prose but not poetry. It concedes the prose-virtues but shows them to coexist with those qualities of "tension" and "complexity" by which the poetical character tended, in those far-off days of the old New Criticism, to be defined. Mack jibbed at the word, "navy", insisting that those critics were returning to older rhetorical interests and disciplines; but the essay has a period flavour to its concentration on metaphor and, even as Mack showed a determination to protect Pope from being found wanting as a metaphysical poet, in its readiness to regard the metaphysical poets as a standard of value. But anyone inclined to dismiss the enterprise as anachronistic would be missing a discussion rich in essential insights, many of which derived specifically from that focus of interest. Mack shows for example how Pope after all knew Donne, "imitated"

him in two whole satires and in many short passages and used him as a starting-point for discernible acts of creative difference) did indeed sometimes use "extensive collocations of witty and ingenious images", but mainly in portraying things he tended to disavow; how the relative scarcity of extended metaphorical elaborations in Pope was the product of a more central conception of resemblance; and how the crypto-metaphorical activity of allusions, puns, mock-heroic effects and irony operates in Pope in the extended articulation of an entire poem rather than in the individual elaboration of single metaphorical images. The specific comparisons between Pope and Donne in this essay, and in a related essay on Pope contributed to G. B. Harrison's *Major British Writers* in 1954, are so full of delicately observed and masterfully formulated discriminations that they make us grateful for the accident of literary history which called for a defence of Pope in the light of Donne-orientated criteria.

"The Muse of Satire" is a landmark in what has come to be known as persona-criticism, in its application to Renaissance and eighteenth-century works which derive from Greco-Roman literature in general and Roman satire in particular. It's a classic description of prescribed modes of self-presentation in satire which had been lost sight of under the influence of post-Romantic conceptions of the poem as a direct reflection of the poet's personality. The immediate purpose was once again the rehabilitation of Pope: from charges of self-negrandizement and of naked malice in poems in which the poet proclaimed his irrepressible commitment to virtue and his disinterested loathing of vice. Mack reminded us that this "strong Antipathy of Good to Bad" (whether or not it happened to be faced with personal self-regard) was a traditionally sanctioned posture, essential to the genre, rhetorically ordained proclamation not of the satirist's individual but of his official character, his *ethos*. Much of this we now take for granted, thanks to this essay among others, and we understand with their help what Yeats said in a different context, that poets who shrink from a proper arrogance were selling the whole enterprise short. That the poet has a responsibility, as priest of the Muses, to assert the nobility of his calling is an old idea, easily forgotten in an age devoted to "sincerity" and accustomed to poems of confessional self-exposure. It is possible, after more than thirty years, to speculate whether Mack would have written exactly as he did had he been able to foresee the later excesses of persona-criticism: but it would hardly be fair to blame him for these.

The other main essays in the volume are the Twickenham introductions, which are well known; a group of bibliographical and textual papers, including two recent pieces of particular interest on the manuscript of the Preface to Pope's *Works*, 1717, and on "Pope's Copy of Chaucer"; and the Northcliffe Lectures of 1972, four biographical studies concerned with Pope's library, his poetical manuscripts (including a particularly fascinating account of some manuscript variants to texts of the *Dunciad*, recorded by the younger Jonathan Richardson), his letters (including an important reassessment of Pope's record as a manipulator of his published correspondence) and the effects of his physical disability on his life and writings. Many of these pieces explore a tangled problem of textual or bibliographical history, or introduce us to the contents and significance of an important manuscript. But the real glory of these later portions of the volume are two appendices, of over 150 pages, which make of the book an indispensable documentary source, and will give it lasting value as a reference book.

The first is "A Finding List of Books Surviving from Pope's Library", first published in *English Literature in the Age of Disguise*, edited by Maximilian E. Novak (1977). It lists 176 volumes known or believed to have survived; all but 19 of which have been inspected by Mack, and records Pope's marginalia. The record is tantalizingly incomplete: Pope's library, unlike Swift's, was not sold after his death, and there is no sale catalogue to give us an idea of the scope of the collection. An exceptionally large number of volumes have actually survived, however, perhaps because many of the books were bequeathed to friends

instead of getting lost in the aftermath of the saleroom. These surviving items include surprisingly few pieces by the Scribblers themselves: no works by Pope himself, or Swift, or Arbuthnot; and only *Trivia* by Gay and the translation of the *Battle of the Frogs and Mice* by Parnell (even Parnell's *Poems* of 1722, which Pope edited, is missing).

Pope's marginalia are usually laconic, an important repository of information, but sometimes disappointingly lacklustre in themselves. They seldom crackle with their author's rich, irritable personality, in the manner of Swift's notes on Burnet or Clarendon. Even the marginalia in anti-Popeian tracts are brief and restrained. The much-marked copy of Tickell's *First Book of Homer's Iliad*, 1715 (which was to have been the rival translation) largely consists of brief indications (of sources, of ungrammatical wordings, of "low" passages signalled by a "5", etc). The richest marginalia are to Pope's copy of Montaigne, in Cotton's translation. Even there, many of the notes are merely indications of sources or analogues. Since the marginalia of Augustan writers are sometimes misunderstood, readers in search of excitement should be warned that when, against the words in Montaigne II xxxvi that there was no author since Homer "that could imitate him", Pope wrote "Velleius Paterculus", he did not mean that the Latin writer was such an author but that Montaigne's words were cited from him. But the whole is a fine record of Pope's exceptionally deep affection for Montaigne ("to whom", he said in an early letter, "I am but a Dog in comparison"). He wrote inside the back cover of the last volume: "This is (in my Opinion) the very best Book for Information of Manners, that has been writ. This Author says nothing but what every one feels at the Heart. Whoever deny it, are not more Wise

than Montaigne, but less honest." Among other annotations, the most interesting is a note by J. West in a volume of Joseph Hall reporting Pope's opinion that "It contained the best poetry & truest Satyr of any of our English poets & that he intended to modernise them as he had done Dr. Donne."

Appendix B is a ninety-page collection of "Letters from, to, or about Pope and His Friends: Unpublished, Partly Published, or Now First Published from the Originals". It includes correspondence found in the Penzance Public Library about the supply of samples of minerals for Pope's grotto by the Cornish antiquary and mineralogist William Borlase, letters to publishers and others about the publication and contents of volumes of the *Miscellanies* and of Pope's correspondence.

This is the largest collection of Pope's correspondence since Sherburn's five-volume edition of 1956. In Mack's review of that work (reprinted in this book), he predicted that new letters would continue to come to light, stimulated in part by "the magnetic powers of a great edition". Mack has done more than anyone else to fulfil this prediction. One's only regret is that he has not chosen to include in this book all the letters of Pope that have appeared since Sherburn, but only those which he himself has uncovered or been able to print in a superior text. Had he taken this further step, this book would have offered, in addition to its many other riches, a "complete" supplement to a major edition.

As it is, there is plenty to be thankful for. A few small omissions: the index has some gaps; there are some misprints throughout, and one or two foreign titles come in surprising forms; and the singular of marginalia is not "marginalium", though modern usage may tolerate the form.

Adaptations and echoes

Keith Walker

PAUL HAMMOND
John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture
251pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
0521 247489

John Oldham isn't much read. If he is known at all, it is vaguely as someone to whom Dryden wrote a moving elegy, or someone who wrote vigorous but incoherent poems against the Jesuits. Part of this (as anyone who has gone into the matter must feel) unwarranted neglect comes about because there is no adequate edition. Harold Brooks's fabled and masterful edition was "all but finished" in 1936; revision was "well advanced" in 1972; but the 300th anniversary of Oldham's death in 1983 came and went with only Paul Hammond's study, *John Oldham and the renewal of classical culture*, by way of celebration. The enquiring amateur must content himself with Ken Robinson's useful but unannotated selection, and the clutch of poems in Harold Love's *Penguin Book of Restoration Verse*. One of Oldham's finest poems, the satire on Charles II called "Sardanapalus", has never been published in any form.

For a poet whose work is so unknown, a great deal is known to scholars, more than about many poets of the seventeenth century. Long ago, Brooks's meticulous scholarship ordered Oldham's bibliography. Thanks to the survival of Oldham's commonplace book in the Bodleian we can study in some detail the drafts and fair copies of a good number of Oldham's poems. Oddly, until Hammond's book, only Rachel Trickett and Roger Sharrock had given Oldham more than passing critical attention.

And yet, Oldham was Dryden's friend, and he put Dryden's theories of translation into practice earlier and perhaps more successfully than Dryden did. Pope has left a record of his careful reading of Oldham, from whom he learnt much. Oldham influenced Samuel Johnson, who planned an edition, and quoted him some nine times in his dictionary, apparently from memory. If the misquotation under "Jo" is anything to go by. One phrase quoted by Johnson is cited by Hammond as characteristic of both Johnson and Oldham under "accountable": "we find from a poet's address to a

friend" the lines "accountable to none / But to my Conscience, and my God alone . . ."

Hammond begins with a painstaking sketch of Oldham's Puritan classical education. Since he was both a schoolmaster and translated much from the classics, this preamble is necessary and welcome. The survey of the early poetry is somewhat stiff-fingered. Hammond passes lightly over the "Satyrs upon the Jesuits", which he feels have had more attention than their merit warrants. Oldham found confidence and almost ease as a poet in his translations or "recreations", as Hammond prefers to call them, and here Hammond finds himself as a critic. He has on enviable command of Latin, and an easy familiarity with Renaissance editions of and commentaries on classical poetry. At the heart of his study are three chapters on Horace, Juvenal and Boccaccio respectively. These assess Oldham's adaptations, sometimes line by line, comparing him with his source, and bringing in comparison with contemporary translations and adaptations where these are relevant. Close reading which had seemed somewhat relentless when deployed against the earlier poems, has more material to work on here, and succeeds very well. Hammond's comments are unfailingly tactful, and alert not only to the local verse context but also to cultural and historical contexts.

The book is a scholarly and welcome survey of a neglected poet. What of the larger claim implicit in the title? Here, I wish Hammond had not been so inhibited by scholarly caution. Something less tentative, more reckless even, was needed. The Restoration saw a decisive readjustment in our views of the literature of classical antiquity, allied to recent developments in poetry, in translation and in critical theory. Many of these developments were initiated or paralleled in France. Oldham, had he lived (he died at thirty), would have been at the centre of this ferment.

John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture has many local felicities: Hammond has a good ear for echoes in Oldham's poetry, echoes of Milton, for whom there are concordances, and echoes of Cowley, for whom there aren't. He has a nice little Latin phrase to boot: "One does not often find, and perhaps not that often, a poet's address to a friend, as we find from a poet's address to a

Simplicities and obliquities

Tim Dooley

ADRIAN HENRI
Penny Arcade: Poems 1978-1982
71pp. Cape. £3.50.
0234 021400
IAN McMILLAN
Now It Can Be Told
95pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £4.50.
11 85635 464 3
PETER MORGAN
A Winter Visitor
64pp. Seeker and Warburg. £5.50.
0436 288117

In 1967, the topicality, wit and cheek of Edward Lucie-Smith's anthology *The Liverpool Scene* made it an attractive book. Its language, admittedly, lacked the excitement of The Beatles' "Penny Lane" or Bob Dylan's "Highway 61 Revisited", but it was stamped with the heavy licence, the compulsory irreverence of the period. One of the larger contributors to that anthology was Adrian Henri, then a thirty-five-year-old painter and art-college lecturer. His poems directed the reader with electronic immediacy to the author's deepest concerns: World Peace, James Ensor, Charlie Parker, the underwear of teenage girls.

In the sixteen years since *The Liverpool Scene*, Adrian Henri's literary career has seen vacillations of popularity but little development. His latest book, *Penny Arcade*, exhibits the familiar virtues of Henri's poems (derivative-ness, obviousness, cloying sentimentality) as well as their single overwhelming virtue (simplicity). It is a very easy book to read, and much of it is inoffensive. *Penny Arcade* contains travel diaries from Connard, Coliformin and Germany; observations on John Lennon's

murder and the riots in Toxteth; bad puns and transcribed graffiti. There are descriptions, in a painting-by-numbers style, of landscapes, clothing, shop-signs and unmade beds. Henri's world has become oddly reminiscent of the world of Funes the Memorious in Borges's story: "In the teeming world of Funes, there were only details, almost immediate in their presence. . . . I suspect, however, that he was not very capable of thought."

Two poems stand out, however: "Angler" and "Aubade" are coherent and quietly moving, and might signal the development of a belated maturity in Henri's work.

Ian McMillan is a performing poet who has succeeded, like Henri, in making a regular living from poetry and related activities. But the resemblance between the two writers ends there. Superficially, this might seem a result of changes in fashion or popular culture, but there is a major difference between the two poets in terms of the seriousness and responsibility with which they approach their writing. The poems in *Now It Can Be Told* are poems of their time: they share a cool nihilism with Elvis Costello's songs, Glen Buxter's cartoons and advertisements for Benson and Hedges cigarettes; but they do not panicle to their time. They are knowing poems, recognizing that language is neither innocent nor transparent while exploiting its obnoxious malfunctions and unexpected local quirks.

In "Screenplay", the first poem in his first collection *The Changing Problem*, McMillan explicitly refused the temptations of a modish pursuit of unlikely comparison: "If the house is a submarine . . . then the trees I can see waving in the wind must be seaweed" - with the line: "No, I'm sorry I think I'm above water." Trying to keep his head above water becomes a preoccupation in *Now It Can Be Told* also.

Functions of femalehood

Hilary Davies

SYLVIA KANTARIS
The Tenth Muse
64pp. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets. £3.
0905291 484
RUTH FAIRLIGHT
Fifteen to Infinity
62pp. Hutchinson. £5.95.
009 1524717
Climates
18pp. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. £1.50.
0906427 347
FRANCES HOROVITZ
Snow Light, Water Light
18pp. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. £1.50.
0906427 69 X

Both Ruth Fairlight and Sylvia Kantaris find relationships with the Muse stormy in their own collections: Fairlight "shouts / and hails and pulls away"; Kantaris has to cope with the below-the-belt codicension of "this dense / late-invented enunciate . . . who . . . keeps repeating, 'Women haven't got the knack'." *The Tenth Muse* and *Fifteen to Infinity* both raise persistent doubts about the range of these two poets and whether this is a function of their "femalehood", if not feminism. There is a preponderance of poems dealing with domestic interiors, battles and reconciliations; the agony and ecstasy of a love affair; motherhood. These are, of course, hallowed and necessary subjects for poetry, and here they are often handled sensitively, but there is nothing particularly arresting in either woman's reassertment of these themes. A more serious criticism, however, than that of unoriginality, is that the poems fail to go beyond a personalized and specific landscape. It is as if the reader were being offered snippets from a family photograph album or, worse, a private diary: the poems are of interest as a day-to-day record of emotional states, but they lack any wider resonance.

Another approach adopted by both Fairlight and Kantaris is the reinterpretation of familiar myths through the eyes of an unfamiliar protagonist or from an unlikely standpoint. Yet the potential that this technique has for a widening of poetic horizons is rarely realized.

Language-games in McMillan's poems tend to signal an engagement with responsibility rather than an evasion of it. Poems and sentences fail to resolve themselves in the expected ways. The results are often very funny; yet they also mimic the ways in which the patterns and efforts of our lives fail to resolve themselves as we would hope.

"Under Difficulty", a poem which finds new ways of asking W. S. Graham's awkward question, "What is the language using us for?" illustrates McMillan's inventiveness at its wry best: A polite reply under a skinhead moon, a discussion with the curtains of the street.

Led kindly, light-buoyed through the morland word for Death which is the same as the morland word for dry-stone-walling-impliment and which is almost the same as the morland proverb which tells people to hold their breath in Cathedrals to ensure health and long life. How do we compensate the victims of a sentence, or the hitherto faces of the gullible in a small copse known to the locals as The Cathedral of the Moors?

Whereas McMillan's attachment to his na-

tive Yorkshire is relieved by irony, Peter Morgan, an adoptive Yorkshireman, treats the part of the county which provides the setting for *A Winter Visitor* with dogged reverence. All the poems in this, his third collection, are set in the small area surrounding the coastal village of Ribblesdale Bay - just south of Whitby and east of Fylingdales. It is a place that Morgan knows intimately, and the recurrence of characters and places from one poem to another gives the volume as a whole a strength and interest that individual poems, sadly, often lack.

At its best, *A Winter Visitor* offers us sensitive appreciation of the relationships in a small community:

I read the levelled barrel of his eyes And string my words like crosskeys to the gap.

He takes to that as he would take A rope bridge crossing a ravine.

Parting as acquaintances We grin a little through our teeth.

The quick smile snaps off in the gale.

Writing with this degree of alertness is, however, rare in *A Winter Visitor*, with too many poems settling for pastiche of better poets or lacking any real compression.

Two Versions of MacBeth

1: A Small Elite
(George MacBeth and I)

We can both say "I'm a genius" (since it all depends what you mean by genius) though to misspellers we might be heinous* crimes - a huge claim made by tiny, teeny us! But still, at times,

we have "touch" like Gerulaitis (with the skill of Gower or Gerulaitis) - for those who speak of arthritis we are see-through frauds like certain nighties. A different key

is what we play in - and *hol polloing* (all the screaming screamers, *hol polloing*) masses would find us quite annoying pseudos - since Pop is what they're all enjoying, and genteel nudes.

I thank you that you called me Scottish (never skilled like Burns but truly Scottish), though horrorpots are horrorpotish it's quite nice to know not all are scottish - a cap that fits

we share, though we're south of the Border (in exile both for certain, south of the Border) where they rhyme this with Harry Lauder and we're hounded by each out-of-order analysis!

*or even Heaneyous

2: After Reading Too Many Poems By George MacBeth About The Deaths Of Alarm Clocks And Little Animals

I want to take a big two-handed shovel and hit them all on the head - all those moles, voles, rabbits and blackbirds left for dead

and nursed too carefully back into suffering. I want to be the jaw on the paw that gives them peace and proves that Nature's red in tooth and claw!

GAVIN EWART

Wrong but romantic

Gillian Avery

GEOFFREY TREASE
The Cormorant Venture
188pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0333 360737

"My writing began before I knew one letter from another". Geoffrey Trease says in the opening lines of his autobiography, reminding how, when he was old enough to make up stories but too young to know how to represent the words he was muttering to himself, he would cover page after page of paper with pretend writing. Now some seventy years later, and fifty years after the appearance of his first boys' book *Bows Against the Barons*, comes his ninety-fifth publication. He has produced verse, drama, biography, autobiography, travel, plays, school stories; but historical romance is his great strength and enthusiasm, and in *The Cormorant Venture* he writes about adventures in 1640 with the same zest as he brought to Robin Hood half a century ago.

Historical fiction has always been a popular genre with children's writers, and though it is fashionable now to declare that it has only recently flowered in the last five decades, this is to overlook the many and excellent stories of the last century. There were pedestrian writers of

course, but Charlotte Yonge, M. and C. Lee, Austin Clare, Margaret Roberts and plenty of others all in their way had the qualities that Geoffrey Trease defined, in *Notes out of School*, as essential for a good historical story: good characterization, lively action, vivid background, accuracy and "the poetic power" to evoke something that is really atmosphere, and not the reek of moth-balls. Undoubtedly, in that they invariably supported any royalist cause that was going, they were the children of their time, as the post-war writers who as inevitably support popular risings are of theirs. And they all in some degree went in for the archaic (or pseudo-archaic) diction from which, as Mr Trease noted thankfully, the present generation of writers has broken free. "The revolution in diction has probably contributed more than any other single factor to overcoming children's prejudice against the historical tale." But alas there was far less prejudice – for all the "upon my troth's" and "quotha"s – in the last century than teachers and librarians tell us there is in the 1980s, and I myself remember the compelling power of John Bennett's *Master Skylark*, written in 1897 and more impregnated with mock Elizabethan talk than most. The reason for the current reaction against historical fiction would be interesting to examine and must surely stem, like

all fashions in children's books, more from the attitude of the present generation of teachers and the way that history is taught than from a change in the nature of young readers.

The popularity of Trease's stories owes much to his skill in presenting, against a carefully drawn historical background, characters who embody the sort of qualities that will appeal to contemporary children. In this he resembles Henty, who did not always, however, take so much trouble with the background. Amoret and Anthony in *The Cormorant Venture* are lively, independent, resourceful, able to contend with any number of villains and defeat them with the same dispatch as their modern counterparts bring to their encounters with spies, dope smugglers and hijackers. The story is set in 1640, against the background of the Short Parliament with "Charles I and his subjects drifting on a collision course towards the fatal Civil War", as the blurb puts it. There are scenes of mobs in the streets of London, electioneering in rural Herefordshire, Van Dyck's studio, the House of Commons, the Queen and the royal children at Richmond Palace. Young Anthony Bassey, son of an immigrant Italian glass-worker and aide to the dashing Sir Renold Mandeville (a real Buchanan hero this), who has been returned as member for Herefordshire, gets himself involved with

scheming Puritans and ruthless Covenanters who are plotting to kidnap the Prince of Wales. Anthony himself is kidnapped, rescued by Amoret, a maid of honour to the Queen, and witnesses the foiling of the attempt to capture the young prince. The book finishes with Amoret, ever a girl of spirit, announcing that she intends to marry Anthony, who is now her match having been raised to the landowning class by his benefactor Sir Renold.

Mandeville, which came earlier in this series, had dealt with Anthony and Amoret (disguised as a boy) and skulduggery in Italy where a gang is out to corner the pictures that Anthony and his master have been sent to buy for the King. The plot was easier to handle than this one, and had the advantage that most of the characters were recognizably imaginary. *The Cormorant Venture* deals with complex issues on a very crowded canvas, and mingling with Stratford, Laud and Pym are invented political figures that may confuse the uninitiated. Clearly Amoret and Anthony will be embroiled in the Civil War next time we meet them, and for all their author's lifelong sympathies with the rights of the people against kings, it is hard to see how he can avoid allowing them to fight for the royalists, as all heroes and heroines of children's books used to do in the unreformed days of my youth.

Decorous delinquents

Colin Greenland

DOUGLAS HILL
Exiles of ColSec
126pp. Gollancz. £5.50.
0575 033487

From Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island*, the point of the castaway story is less the foreign location itself than how much like home the survivors can make it. Survival is not a question of conforming to the unknown environment: that way leads to *Lord of the Flies*. It's a question of what one can salvage from the wreck. The remains of a former life provide the foundations of a new one. Conversely, the island becomes a testing-ground for the rules and arrangements brought from home, especially for child castaways in a place without grown-ups.

Exiles of ColSec offers an interesting contemporary angle on the cultural politics of the sub-genre, because these youngsters are convicts, rejects of their society. They have been branded deviant or criminal by the Organization, the grim and inflexible oligarchy which rules an Earth ravaged by the Virus. Decades, and deported to establish a colony on a planet called Klydor. Their spacecraft has crash-landed, and only six of them are still alive. Cord McKay has his muscles and shrewdness from growing up with his uncle, a tramp in the wilds of the Scottish Highlands. Samella Connel, a former slave, can operate the craft's computer. Three of the others, Heleth, Jeko and Rontal, have only the experience of the gangs who scavenge in Earth's broken cities. What these sixteen-year-olds have to establish in the pretty jungle of Klydor is that their skills can be used co-operatively instead of competitively, towards civilization instead of against it.

Unfortunately, this is about as far as Douglas Hill gets. *Exiles of ColSec* is the first of a trilogy, so disappointment may be premature, but the work so far is skimpy, and structurally weak at important junctures. We should probably overlook the fact that a "damaged and depleted Earth" could hardly afford ColSec, its Colonization Section, whose "translight" ships seek out planets to plunder and dump hooligans on. Having got his characters to Klydor, however, Hill lets their brutalized psyches heal far too quickly and with too little fuss. Jeko punches Cord, Cord throws Jeko across the cabin, and thereafter, even in disagreements over sexual equality, these deprived delinquents behave as sensibly and politely as in updated Famous Five.

Part of the reason for this narrative weakness is the sixth survivor, an adult, known only as the Lamprey. Once an official assassin, then "bottle chief of the Death Angels, the toughest and meanest troop in Quake City", he is a psychotic who makes life more difficult

for the others by salvaging the only working laser rifle and shooting at everything that moves, including Cord himself, and some clearly humanoid indigenes. The problem with the Lamprey is that the youngsters, especially Heleth, Jeko and Rontal, are not sufficiently like him, though they have grown up in the gangs that live by his vicious laws. Hill rapidly drains all the violence out of them and externalizes it in this unnecessary villain. Exiled from their social group, the Lamprey becomes a demon in the dark, more deadly than the alien jungle itself.

Klydor is vague and unfinished, a sketch made up of science fiction clichés of fifty years ago. The indigenes remain remote, "primitive" and "savage". When Cord and Samella come into contact with them, it is not to learn anything about Klydor but to teach them how to kill the local giant predatory worms: a true imperialist act, dispensing the weaponry and wisdom of a superior race.

Ready for action

Jennifer Moody

JEAN URE
You Win Some, You Lose Some
192pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £4.50.
0370 309960
GERARD MACDONALD
The All Electric Amusement Arcade
160pp. Hamish Hamilton, £5.50.
0241 111870

Jamie, the hero of *You Win Some, You Lose Some*, is a seventeen-year-old ballet dancer and a virgin, curious to know what he is missing. Jean Ure is in no doubt that he has no hint of ambivalence in his make up (nor is there any ambiguity in his direct and specific vocabulary). He is determined, in a scientific way, to fill the gaps in his knowledge. The accessibility of the girls in his class is analysed with great attention. Twice he draws up seduction plans, and twice he is thwarted: once by a girl who has emotional hang-ups and once by a girl who reads an invitation to spend a night in a hotel as an offer of marriage. A third opportunity falls through his own inadequacy in the face of the uninhibited and voracious offer from another girl. Neatly counterpointing these reverses are his own rejections of the sexual overtures of his male flat-mate, which are couched in much the same terms as Jamie's overtures to his unwilling female partners. Throughout his surprisingly unobjectionable and amusing adventures he shares a dedication to dancing with Anita, a supportive friend of many years standing, and it is of course with her that in the end he realizes that for him sex makes sense

only in a context of affection. Awkwardness and anxiety vanish. Love sets the rules. Jenn Ure is an experienced and accomplished writer and she handles plot with élan, character with understanding and dialogue with realism. What could be laboured and condescending is deft, amusing, even enlightening. This is a worthy sequel to *A Proper Little Noisyoff*.

The most endearing fictional characters are those who like Jamie try and when they fail are mortified but try again, and it is less easy to like those who are sure that they know everything from the moment they are born. *The All Electric Amusement Arcade* contains just such a heroine. Bella is in trouble with the educational welfare officer for truancy and her family life is collapsing round her. Yet she is unmoved by anything except the pop-group she is promoting and the run-down amusement arcade she is revamping. In pursuit of these two aims everything and everyone else is steam-rollered. This novel is the basis for a television series similar to Gerard Macdonald's *The Boy Who Won the Pools* and as a book it makes a good television script. The characters are cardboard waiting for actors to flesh them out with expressions, personalities and motivations: the plot is simple and mostly consists of scoring off unpopular characters. The dialogue is excellent, punchy and sharp. It is an irony presumably unintended by the author that the reader's sympathy goes mainly to Bella's father. Struggling to start his own business, he is impeded by his own mother, ignored by Bella and her brother and abandoned by his wife. The accusation that he has no time for them is amply made up for by the amount of time they have for themselves.

adolescent girl who knows how to farm and delights in Gray and Jane Austen; the last nap (hence the title) arriving in his unique radiation-proof suit. However, Anne relates her own story in a style that is as plain and sure as the moral sense with which she responds to her visitor. The reference to Jane Austen is not coincidental, because it is on the scrupulous honesty of its language that this novel depends for its credibility. And it is credible, so much so that one never questions it for a moment.

Brother in the Land is another diary. Danny sees one of many Bombs fall on England and survives the ensuing horrors in the ruins of his northern town. The details of fall-out and its effects may well be authentic, yet the story seems likely to persuade only the converted. Danny writes in clichés ("lulled us into false sense of security", "thunder rent the skies"). "Like" substitutes for "as" throughout, while "snarled", "snapped", "shrilled" and their cronies attempt to conceal the dullness of the direct speech. If (a doubtful if) this sort of style is deliberate, it might be defended as a "realistic" representation of teenage speech; nevertheless, it is bound to hinder original writing.

The human events which Danny describes are perhaps in line with the message Robert Swindells takes into "many schools" as "secretary of his local Peace Movement group", but the assumptions beneath them seem sorely deep enough to serve as a basis for fiction. Despite history's record that people were capable of extraordinary generosity in the Blitz and the trenches, Swindells prophesies universal murder and pillage. Officials and soldiers emerge as brutally repressive, becoming "feudal" overlords who stifle the other survivors into peasant status and force them to turn over the frozen earth bare-handed. One's scepticism increases; even things one had expected to believe in, such as the complete failure of the crops, seem suddenly questionable. And what should we do to prevent war? Maintain our "reverence for life", says the only humane character, giving us the very criterion that makes this book unconvincing.

The man who arrives in Anne's valley in *Z for Zachariah* is a nuclear scientist, single-minded and practical; he regards everything in the valley, including her, as breeding stock. When she resists, he tries to hunt her down, destroying her refuge and even burning her books. He represents the people who have made disaster possible by suppressing conscience and imagination in the service of research. Anne really does reverence life, as she rescues a bird or stands spellbound under the apple blossom. Swindells might report that there would be no birds or apple blossom, but by the time Anne finally sets out westward across the waste land, fantasy has demonstrated – as realism has not – that humanity is worth saving.

Falling out

Dominic Hibberd

ROBERT C. O'BRIEN
Z for Zachariah
192 pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0575 033789
ROBERT SWINDELLS
Brother in the Land
151pp. Oxford University Press. £5.95.
019 2714910

These two stories about life after the Bomb could hardly be more different. They are evidence, were any needed, that fiction does not convince by means of scientific accuracy, political commitment or the use of "everyday language".

Z for Zachariah, first published in 1975, is a welcome reissue. On the face of it, the plot is implausible: one New England valley surviving destruction unscathed; its sole inhabitant an

About their daily business

David Goldstein

THERÈSE and MENDEL METZGER
Jewish Life in the Middle Ages: Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts of the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries
316pp. New York: Alpine Fine Arts (available in the UK through International Book Distributors). £50.
0933516576

Hebrew illuminated manuscripts are not as plentiful as their Christian counterparts. For Jews the word has always been more important than the image, and the biblical prohibition against representational art meant that although in time books and manuscripts for use at home were illustrated, those written specifically for communal use in the synagogue were left unadorned.

Thérèse and Mendel Metzger therefore set themselves a daunting task, in *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, by restricting themselves to their choice of illustrations to Hebrew manuscripts, excluding both Christian manuscripts and also early Hebrew printed books. Nevertheless they have produced a wealth of handsome material, drawing on 113 manuscripts, and listing a further 146 where additional items may be found. The book contains nearly 400 illustrations, the majority in colour; but hardly any from manuscripts in American collections. The publishers are to be congratulated on the quality of the reproduction. I have compared several pictures with the original manuscripts and found the fidelity of colour printing remarkable.

The text consists of seven main sections, beginning with the Jewish medieval world view, and gradually narrowing the subject area to Jewish family and religious life, including costume, and professional and artisan occupations. The authors write succinctly and with authority, a slip of the pen no doubt being responsible for the statement that the *Shema* is recited three times (instead of the traditional twice) a day. Numbers in the margins refer the reader to the appropriate illustrations.

But frequently there are no illustrations

from which to draw. Apparently there does not exist in a medieval Hebrew manuscript a picture of a Jew wearing *tefillin* (phylacteries), or of a Jewess kindling the Sabbath lights. The only illustration of a *mezuzah* on a doorpost is in the Rothschild Miscellany, which was probably illuminated by a Christian; the position of the *mezuzah* is furthermore ritually incorrect. These omissions, the authors themselves point out, are extraordinary. It is unlikely that such scenes were not painted. It is more probable that, given the vicissitudes to which Hebrew books are subject, they have perished.

The authors have tried to compensate for this lack of material in a number of different ways, some of which it must be said savour of doubtful practice. A pigeon which is purely decorative in a Bible manuscript from Castile is reproduced with the caption that such a bird is ritually fit to eat. The reader may be excused if he gains thereby the mistaken impression that the illuminator was trying to illustrate which birds were *kasher*. Similar captions are appended to illustrations of decorative fish. (Incidentally, the interesting remark that the pig is hardly ever represented in Hebrew manuscripts must be qualified, because the boar-hunt scene occurs a number of times.)

There are examples of a more deliberate wrenching of the illustration out of context. Two are taken from the *Haggadah*, the order of service for Passover, the most profusely and most frequently illustrated text of all. Mendel Metzger has himself published an exhaustive study of this genre. It is the more surprising therefore to see a picture from a *Haggadah* of a naked woman, which illustrates the symbol of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16:7; "your breasts were fashioned, and your hair grew; yet you were naked and bare", accompanied by a caption extolling the Jewish concern for the poor. It is a worthy and accurate sentiment, but has little to do with the original picture.

Similarly, a reproduction in a Spanish *Haggadah* of Pharaoh's advisers counselling him to get rid of the Hebrews is described by the authors as a picture of courtiers exhorting the King of Castile in the early fourteenth century to expel the Jews from his kingdom. We know

that medieval artists were guilty of anachronism, but this is surely going too far. Nor is it any consolation to find the authors at the end of the book actually confessing that they have sometimes made a picture say what it did not intend to say.

The inclination to find specifically Jewish traits in images which are actually more universal in character can also be seen in the section dealing with "the Jewish quarter". Most of the buildings portrayed here are not Jewish at all. In fact, some of them are downright ecclesiastical (although without crosses, as the authors remind us). Nevertheless, they formed part of the medieval Jewish world, or at least the background to it. However, the full-page colour plate of a building from the Cohort Pentateuch, which is described as possibly a synagogue or school, has recently been identified by J. Erdmann as the earliest extant representation of the Veste Coburg.

It is a pity that this beautifully produced book is marred by lapses of this kind. The scholarly apparatus provided by the authors is very detailed. They give a description of each of the manuscripts used; and the notes provide a sound basis for a complete Hebrew iconography. The bibliographies are adequate, although the listing on Hebrew manuscript illumination could have been extended with profit.

The first part of Bezalel Narkiss's *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford University Press. £57. 0 19 725977 4) covers sixty-one Spanish and Portuguese MSS in ample detail, with full indexes, an invaluable glossary and a separate volume of 171 plates. The importance of Hebrew manuscripts in the study of medieval works of art has long been recognized, but this catalogue published under the auspices of the British Academy and of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities provides an invaluable and codicologically up-to-date guide to the work of the Sephardic schools of illumination and the importance of its relationship to the major Christian traditions of the time.

G. N.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Sergeant E. W. Cox, nineteenth-century criminal lawyer; any information; for a research project. Peter Spiller. Clare Hall, Cambridge CB3 9AL.

Aleister Crowley: contact sought with owners of rare or unusual works by Crowley who would consent to their examination; for a comprehensive bibliography. J. K. Richmond. Postbus 10023, 1001 EA Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Josef Matthias Hauer, Viennese composer; any information on the whereabouts of manuscripts and first editions. Gerhard Zeller. Koberlstrasse 9, A-8010 Graz, Austria.

Lieutenant-General Percy Kirke (1646?–91): any correspondence and documents outside the major archival collections; for a biography. Thomas Richardson. 1 Forest Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 8LF.

Harold Laski and Denis Brogan: letters, manuscripts, reminiscences; for a study of their writings on America. Hugh Tulloch. Department of History, University of Bristol, Wills Memorial Building, Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RJ.

(Mary) Edmonia Lewis (1843–1927), black American sculptor active in Europe in the 1870s and 80s: location of sculpture, letters, photographs, etc; for a biography. Marilyn Richardson. Department of Humanities, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, USA.

Sir Holford Mackinder (1861–1947), geographer: whereabouts of MSS owned by his literary executrix, the late Miss J. M. Ritchie. A. S. Bell. Rhodes House Library, South Parks Road, Oxford OX2 7RU.

Lillian Hellman: letters, recollections, etc; for an authorized biography. William Abrams. c/o Little, Brown and Company, 34 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02106, USA.

Alexander Louis Telxera de Mattos (1865–1921), translator: any information about his correspondence; for a study. Ria Vanderauwera. University of Antwerp, UFSIA, Rodesstraat 14, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium.

National Service, 1945–1963: documents, personal reminiscences of National Servicemen or of regular servicemen involved in their training; for a commissioned study. Trevor Royle. 6 James Street, Panobello, Edinburgh EH15 2DS.

Normandy campaign, 1944: poems by those who took part in the landings and subsequent campaign; for a collection now in preparation. Melville Hardiment. 14 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex CM20 3EW.

Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan (d 1859): whereabouts of her papers, letters, and location of her grave in Highgate Cemetery. C. B. Atkinson. English Department, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada N9B 2X3.

W. H. Perkin, English chemist: location of correspondence between Perkin and Heinrich Caro (1834–1910), Carl Liebermann (1842–1914) and Carl Graebe (1841–1927), especially letters 1869–80 concerning the synthesis of Alizarine. K. R. Hartley. Leonrod Strasse 77, 8000 München 19, German Federal Republic.

Carl Riddle (1858–1932), founder of Abbots-holme School: any papers or personal recollections; for a biography. Peter Seaby. Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, CB3 9DD.

B. Traven: correspondence, manuscripts; for a commissioned biography. Karl S. Guthke. 401 Boylston Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA.

Rebecca West: any private collections of Rebecca West's letters; for an updated bibliography of her work based on G. E. Hutchinson's *Preliminary Checklist of the Writings of Rebecca West*. Sheila H. Macdonald. College Hall, Malei Street, London WC1E 7HZ.

Maurice Woods, Secretary of the Unionist Social Reform Committee set up in 1911: letters and political papers; for research purposes. Kathy Lovell Williams. Alpha, The Park, Blaenavon, Gwent.

Ernest Branah (Smith) (1869–1942): any information about his life (especially his connection with China); correspondence, etc; for a biographical essay. David I. Steinberg. 6207 Goodview Street, Bethesda, Maryland 20817, USA.

Sir Wilfred Grenfell (1865–1940), medical missionary: reminiscences, letters, photographs, or any other items of interest; for a biography. Ronald Rompkey. Canadian-American Center, University of Maine, 154 College Avenue, Orono, Maine 04469, USA.

Ellen Terry (1847–1928): whereabouts of unpublished material by or about Ellen Terry, her associates, and her children, especially material about her daughter, Edith Craig; for a study. Nine Awerbach. Department of English D1, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104, USA.

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